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“
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”

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This walkable town is known for its breweries, shops and restaurants and is home to Dunedin Brewery, Florida’s oldest microbrewery. Honeymoon Island State Park and Caladesi Island State Park are both close by and excellent locations for spotting birds and sea turtles.

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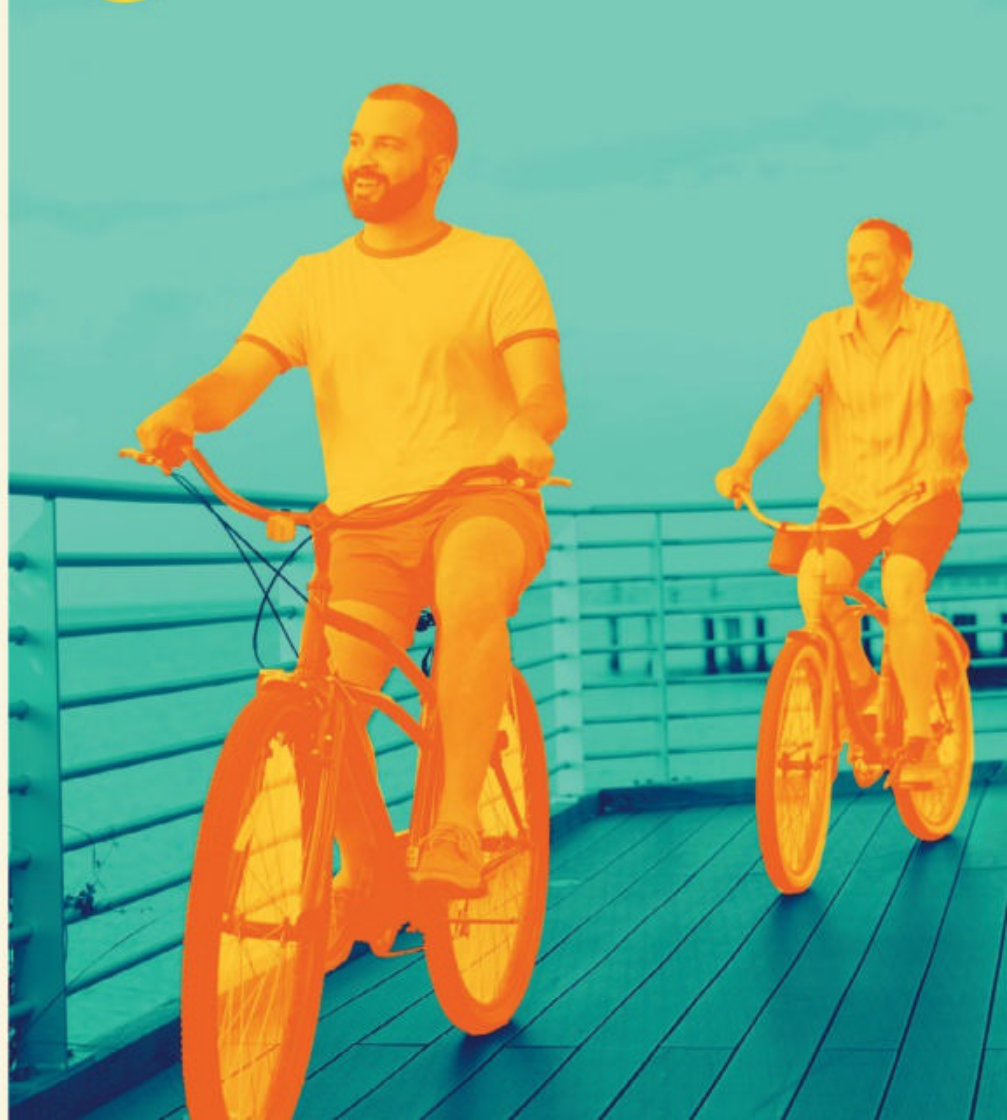
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CHIMAR

Mike Satinover
prepping the
noodle machine at
Akahoshi Ramen

56

The Ramen Lord

At Chicago's buzziest new restaurant, Mike Satinover is obsessed with one goal: making the perfect bowl of Japanese noodles.

By Kevin Pang

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THE POWER 50

Who's in charge here? The heavy hitters in our rankings know how to use their influence to make things happen in Chicago and beyond.

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Designers have gone playful for spring. These pieces, photographed at the Old Post Office in the West Loop, feature twists guaranteed to deliver.

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By Annie Howard

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FROM THE EDITOR

The New Power Generation



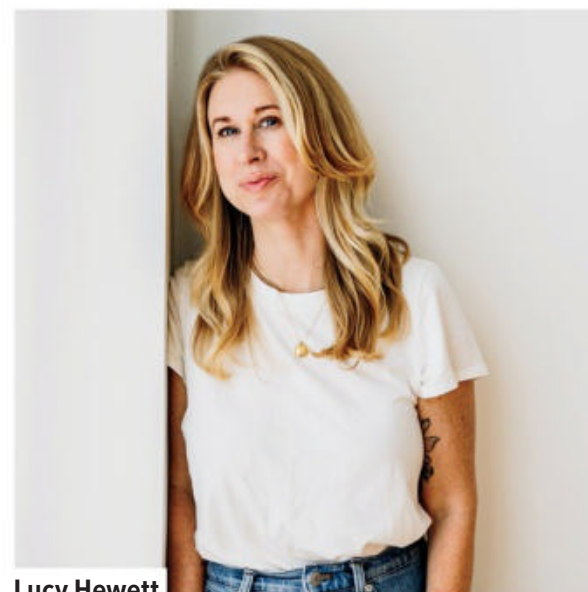
IT'S STARTLING HOW MUCH HAS CHANGED SINCE THE LAST time *Chicago* compiled its Power 50 rankings, in 2016. Looking at the top 10 alone from that list: Rahm Emanuel now lives on the other side of the world as the U.S. ambassador to Japan, moneybags Ken Griffin and Bruce Rauner have also left town, Mike Madigan awaits trial on corruption charges, and Rocky Wirtz died last year.

The vacuum they left has been filled by a new crop of leaders, some carried to power by the progressive movement that has swept Chicago – a movement they helped spur. A remarkable 37 of the latest Power 50 (page 42) are nowhere to be found on the 2016 list. Ten of the new additions are under 40 years old, two even under 30.

Power can come in many forms, of course. Political clout. Money. Information. Rhetorical sway. You will see that reflected in the new rankings, which represent the breadth of leadership in this city, from business and politics to culture and sports. You will also find the origin stories of four of our new additions, told in their words. Here's hoping that future Power 50 prospects will read their tales and be inspired.

Terrance Noland
Editor in Chief

INSIDE PEEK



Lucy Hewett

The Lord's Work

LUCY HEWETT HAS PHOTOGRAPHED plenty of food stories for *Chicago*, but illustrating the intensity of chef Mike Satinover ("The Ramen Lord," page 56) was a different kind of challenge. "This wasn't going to be a studio setup with lights," she says. "We were trying to capture all of Mike's responsibilities, along with the precision and details that go into making ramen. So I just decided to be his shadow." She spent the day with him at Akahoshi Ramen, from the morning prep through meal service. While "dancing around the restaurant," as she puts it, she used two cameras to switch between closer, introspective portraits and wide shots that got at the energy of the place. Days later, Hewett returned – this time as a customer, trying a bowl of Satinover's signature miso ramen. "It was really delicious." –TAJ SMITH

ICEBREAKER

During a shoot for "The Power 50," Blackhawks principal owner Danny Wirtz's sweater, embroidered with the team's logo, caught the eye of *Chicago* art director Elizabeth Carlisle. "It was very nice," she says. "Simple and classic." Carlisle mustered up the courage to ask Wirtz if it was available to purchase. "Oh no," Wirtz responded. "I had this specifically made." Now that's a power move. – T.S.



A stylish Wirtz

PHOTOGRAPHY: (NOLAND) MICHAEL ZAJAKOWSKI; (HEWETT) STEPHANIE BASSOS; (WIRTZ) ALEXANDER GOULETAS

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TALK TO US



Knife Points

All my life I've had an irrational fear of sharp knives ["Taming the Fire," January]. I now have a newfound appreciation for an ancient instrument that has been at my service all along. I just didn't see the beauty or value until now. **Cynthia Oneglia via email**

This article is a classic, destined for anthologies and required reading in writing classes of many stripes. **Tony Bill via email**

A wonderful piece of writing that describes the creation of another beautiful artifact. **@skr1125 via X**

FUNGI FANS

I lived near Irving and Western for almost 10 years, so Mr. Mr. Fungi is near and dear to my heart ["Looking for Mr. Mr. Fungi," January]. I've been wondering who it was for ages. I hope they reunite because their tags make me smile every time. **@nihilistabyssmusic via Instagram**

I thought I was the only one who wondered about this! **@palomastarr via Instagram**

Salute to Kelly Engelbrecht and *Chicago* magazine for going down this rabbit hole and shedding light on some of our city's most intriguing and elusive writers, rollers, and artistic vandals. **@butchersblind2 via X**

This is a wonderful piece. It describes a full world of which we see only half. It's like night-vision goggles or a trail camera, but instead of helping hunt game, it illuminates people who paint images on the cityscape. **@DanaHoule via X**

RESEARCH RULES

Shana Kelley gave an inspirational TEDx talk a few months ago. I can't wait to see what comes next for her and the lab ["The Ultimate Bioresearch Lab," January]. **@tatigramss via Instagram**

WHERE TO FIND US



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■ Our email newsletters alert you to the latest in dining, culture, shopping, real estate, current events, and more. Sign up at **chicagomag.com/newsletters**.

Q:

Why do Chicagoans say "Jewels" instead of "Jewel"?



CITY OF BIG QUESTIONS

ANSWERED BY
EDWARD ROBERT
MCLELLAND

Have you ever shopped for groceries at Jewels? If you have, you're pronouncing the store's name wrong. It's Jewel – short for Jewel Tea Company, the name of the original business that was founded here in 1899. So why do so many Chicagoans add an s?

It's a linguistic phenomenon with stores, especially grocery stores. Kroger, Aldi, and Meijer are commonly referred to as Kroger's, Aldi's, and Meijer's. (Even President Biden said "Meijer's" on a visit to Michigan. At one time, this would have been correct, since the chain was founded as Meijer's Thrifty Acres.)

According to the economic news site Marketplace, the practice can be traced to the tendency to name businesses after their founders (for instance, Marshall Field's). Shoppers are so used to associating businesses with individual owners that they unconsciously use the possessive form – especially when the company's name sounds like it could be a person's name, whether it actually is or not.

Not that Jewel minds. In 2022, the grocery chain posted on its X account: "We are all good with the s. The Jewels is the real OG." And a Jewel-Osco spokesperson says the company has at times even used the s in promotions.

Send your questions about the Chicago area to **emcclelland@chicagomag.com**.

A young man and woman are smiling and holding wine glasses in a bar. The woman has curly hair and is wearing a denim jacket. The man has a beard and is wearing a light-colored shirt. They are standing in front of a bar with many bottles of wine on shelves in the background. The lighting is warm and cozy, with pendant lights hanging from the ceiling.

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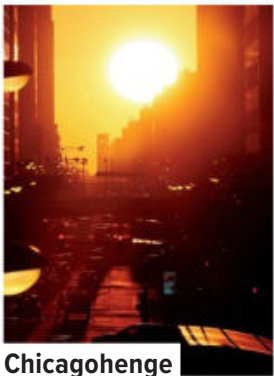
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Chicagohenge

Talking Points

This month's conversation starters

1 The **state primary** is Mar. 19. On the ballot: Eileen O'Neill Burke versus Clayton Harris III for Cook County state's attorney, and the mayor-backed Bring Chicago Home, a progressively scaled tax on big-dollar real estate deals to fund homeless services.

2 If you can't beat 'em, steal their manager. **Craig Counsell**, whom the Cubs poached from the division rival Brewers by doubling his salary, coaches his first game for the local squad Mar. 28, on the road against the Rangers.

3 Highland Park native **Richard Marx** will perform at the Auditorium Theatre Mar. 1, but don't you dare talk during his show. In January, he told a chatty New York fan to "learn some fucking manners."

4 The next edition of **Chicagohenge**, the semiannual equinoctial phenomenon in which the setting sun shines between skyscrapers on our east-west downtown streets, hits Mar. 19 at 7:02 p.m.

PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN J. KIM/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

THE 312



La Salle Street Blues

As businesses desert the once-vibrant corridor, boosters worry the mayor won't get behind a mixed-use revitalization plan. By ROBERT REED

THE JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER WAS FOR DECADES DOWNTOWN'S EPICENTER of state government, a home for departments ranging from the governor's office to a driver services facility. Now the 17-story curved glass tower—an exemplar of post-modern architecture—stands forlornly empty, with signs affixed to its entryways announcing in big red letters: "The Driver Services Facility Has Moved Across the Street." But come mid-2026, the old haunt is expected to crackle with new vigor as Google opens a second regional headquarters there, expanding beyond its base in Fulton Market (see page 22).

On top of bringing along thousands of well-paid employees, Google is sparking hopes of a turnaround of economically distressed—some would say *depressed*—La Salle Street, which runs along the Thompson Center's west edge. Once among the most robust business corridors in the country, it is reeling from corporate restructurings, employee downsizing, and

disruptions spawned by the pandemic and the remote-work era. The result: a historic office building vacancy rate of more than 25 percent and climbing.

Adding to the strain: Some community, corporate, and real estate interests question whether Mayor Brandon Johnson is on board with the city's 2022 rescue plan, La Salle Street Reimagined. City Hall didn't respond to *Chicago's* emails requesting comment, but when pressed to talk about La Salle Street late last year by the *Sun-Times*,

Johnson stopped short of coming out in favor of the rescue plan, insisting instead that Chicago has "the fastest-growing downtown anywhere in the country." His 2024 budget does not include any of the public subsidies for the revamp that had been expected.

The ambitious rescue plan, hatched under Johnson's predecessor, Lori Lightfoot, envisions remaking La Salle Street

between Randolph and Van Buren into a mixed-use neighborhood brimming with young, diverse workers and families enjoying new residential dwellings, restaurants, bars, entertainment venues, and a supermarket.

"Google is proof that downtown is not dead, but its entry is only part of the solution. We need more," says Scott Henry, a founder of Celadon Partners, which is looking to redevelop a 41-story site at 105 West Adams Street, next to the Rookery, the landmark building at 209 South La Salle. The Celadon project is among five La Salle Street Reimagined efforts approved by the Lightfoot administration. But developers are counting on Johnson for city-backed financing to help fund additional ones.

Named after the 17th-century French explorer René-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, the corridor is known for towering art deco office buildings. It's been an atmospheric backdrop for *The Dark Knight*

and *The Untouchables*. In recent years, major tenants, including BMO Bank and Bank of America, moved out, taking thousands of workers. That exodus of bankers, lawyers, and rank-and-file staffers – on top of pandemic cutbacks – doomed many restaurants and stores, resulting in a 2022 retail vacancy rate of 36 percent in the corridor, the city estimates.

A recent walk down La Salle found rows of empty storefronts and "For Rent" signs on office buildings, despite the Chicago

Board of Trade and the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank anchoring its south end. Also missing is a sense of the activity that's felt in livelier areas such as River North and the West Loop. Unless this dynamic changes, La Salle Street will continue losing tenants while failing to attract new ones, caution real estate experts. "Companies want employees to enjoy

where they work," says Eric Feinberg, vice chair and cohead of the Chicago region for Savills, an international commercial real estate advisory firm. "The best way is to offer an energized environment with a more 'work, play, and live' aspect."

That is the trifecta La Salle Street Reimagined is targeting. The five projects already in the pipeline intend to turn office space into apartments or condominiums, adding at least 1,600 units. For example, the Prime Group's proposal for renovating 208 South La Salle Street includes 280 apartments, along with a fitness center, to go with two existing hotels. Meanwhile, Celadon's project will transform office space into 247 dwellings.

Most of those Celadon units – 75 percent – will be set aside for affordable housing, a fundamental objective of the La Salle Street makeover. The overarching plan calls for 30 percent of new residential units to be affordable to boost economic and social diversity downtown.

In its 2022 request for La Salle Street proposals, the city specified that such units must be reserved for residents making no more than 60 percent of the metro area's median income, which works out to a cap of about \$66,000 for a family of four.

Adding affordable housing to mixed-use projects typically comes with a public financing sweetener to make sure the projects are financially sustainable for developers. The five La Salle Street Reimagined projects call for about \$300 million in city-backed subsidies, primarily from tax increment financing, in addition to \$870 million in private investment. "This is where the city's role becomes important," says Geoff Smith, executive director of the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University.

Mayor Johnson rattled La Salle Street backers by seeking to tap into a \$434 million TIF surplus, including money from a designated La Salle Street TIF, to help fill a city budget hole. That's why the 2024 budget does not include any La Salle Street funding. But Alderperson Bill Conway, whose 34th Ward includes the central business district, says he's seen City Hall forecasts that show La Salle Street financing in 2025 and 2026.

That's not soon enough for him. He wanted 2024 TIF funds allocated to the five projects and a rebuild of the corridor's streetscape. "I worry that waffling on that commitment, or reneging, will make people hold back on investing downtown," he says. Developers aren't panicking just yet. Some chalk up the delay to a new mayor inundated with urgent matters such as the migrant crisis. "I think the new administration is getting settled," says Michael Reschke Sr., founder of the Prime Group, which is also involved in the Thompson Center rehab and another La Salle Street corridor project at 111 West Monroe Street. "We're just waiting for the green light."

Could Johnson's slow roll simply reflect a reluctance to give props to political rival Lightfoot? If so, Conway suggests an easy fix: "If he wants to call it the Brandon Johnson Reimagine La Salle Project, I'm all for it." ■

"Google is proof that downtown is not dead, but its entry is only part of the solution. We need more."

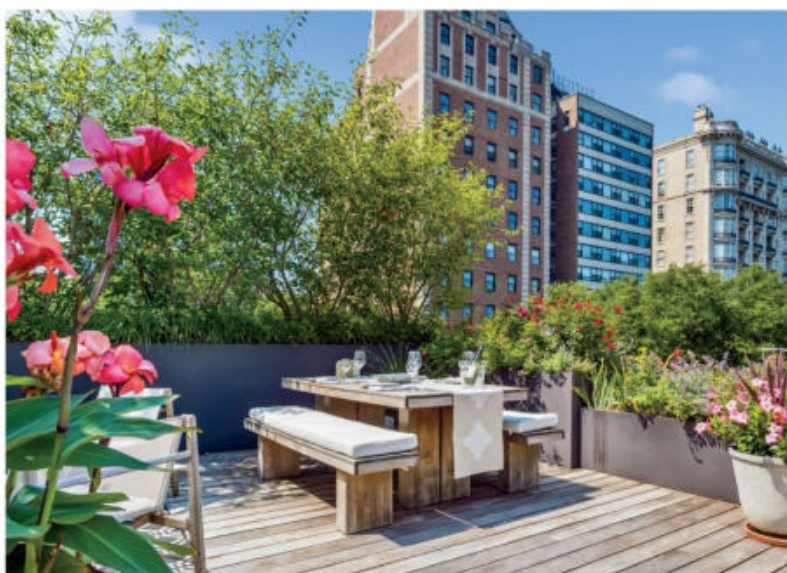
—Scott Henry,
founder, Celadon Partners

LISTING OF THE MONTH

Gold Coast *Empire*

A mansion with TV and movie cameos on its résumé hits the market.

By CARISA CRAWFORD CHAPPELL



PHOTOGRAPHY: (HOUSE) VHT STUDIOS; (HAUGE) ANNA JUNG-HWA

WHEN YOU HAVE A 9,700-square-foot house that exudes extravagance, Hollywood comes calling. No wonder, then, that the mansion at 1521 North State Parkway, now for sale at \$7.7 million, has been featured onscreen several times, including in the Fox TV drama *Empire* and the Mel Gibson romantic comedy *What Women Want*. Built in 1894, the six-bedroom Gold Coast residence was designed by George Maher, an influential architect known for bucking traditional styles by mixing in modern designs. It was renovated recently by Hewitt Horn but retains its Old World charm, modified for today's living.

The elegance starts with a limestone exterior boasting French doors to the balcony and an elegant arched iron front door. Inside, a long gallery with custom paneling opens to a grand staircase and a large formal living room with a fireplace. The vibe is ornate museum, with soaring 12-foot ceilings and large wall spaces where the homeowner displays oversize artwork. Floor-to-ceiling windows let plenty of natural light shine through, while dramatic chandeliers add to the ambience. The rooms flow into one another, making the expansive home ideal for entertaining. Touches like a formal dining room with arched windows and a white kitchen with a refrigerator disguised as part of the cabinetry ooze luxury. Upstairs is an exquisite library with a fireplace and window seat nook.

A landscaped rooftop terrace, with built-in grill, fireplace, and lighting, and a more intimate main-level terrace make it possible to enjoy outdoors in the bustling city. But out-of-town beckons, too, and there's ample room to store your means of getaway thanks to a one-car garage and a parking pad. Just make sure you pick a ride fitting for an empire builder. **C**

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> TREASURE HOUSE

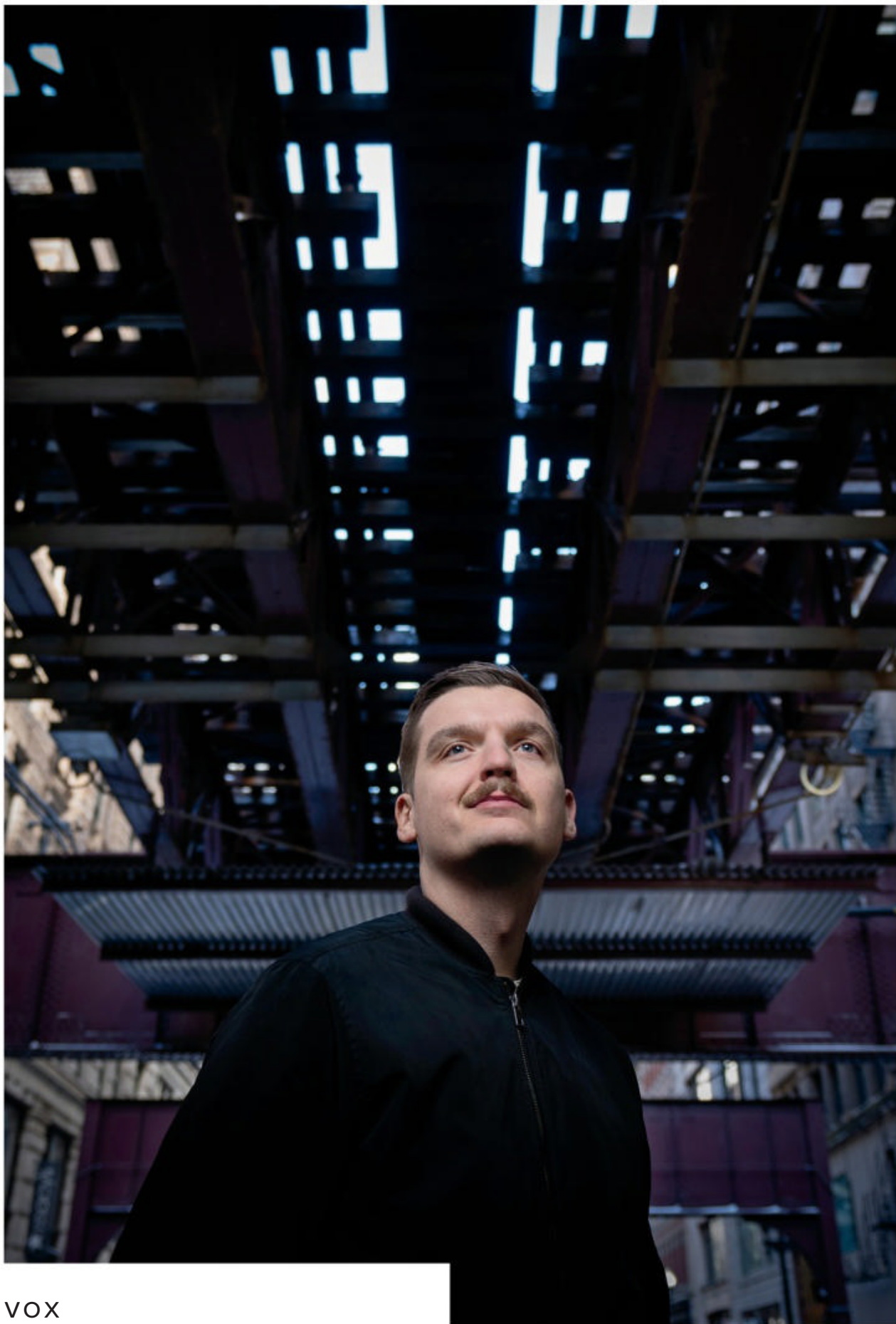
"The resale shop is a treasure indeed! There's no shortage of great finds, including gorgeous vintage glassware, that will give your space character. Sales support Metropolitan Family Services DuPage." 497 Pennsylvania Ave.

> JAVI'S BURRITOS

"This taqueria has almost single-handedly fed our staff for five years during long shifts into late night. The food's homemade, delicious, and affordable." 544 Crescent Blvd.

> BLACKBERRY MARKET

"My favorite local café, with the best coffee and tasty food. I love the farmhouse breakfast and the cinnamon roll. They're accommodating of gluten and nut sensitivities and vegan diets. And the generous space makes it a perfect spot for a meeting." 401 N. Main St. —INTERVIEW BY JUDY SUTTON TAYLOR



VOX

Raising L

Commuters Take Action cofounder **Fabio Göttlicher** wants you to know that Chicago's public transit system is in trouble.

Interview by XIMENA N. BELTRAN QUAN KIU

IN *BATMAN BEGINS*, the 2005 film in which Chicago stood in for Gotham City, a young Bruce Wayne rides a train resembling the L into the city with his billionaire parents. The car is sleek, clean, and modern. “Gotham’s been good to our family, but the city’s been suffering,” Thomas Wayne says to his son. “People less fortunate than us have been enduring very hard times. So we built a new, cheap public transportation system to unite the city.”

Fans of the film know what happens next. The city falls into disrepair, and the public transit system becomes a decrepit and scary mess, one resembling Chicago’s real-life CTA lines – and that’s if the trains show up at all.

During this winter’s subzero weather, commuters reported wait times of up to 30 minutes between trains. This can’t be blamed on the temperature. Commuters Take Action, a grassroots transit advocacy group, has been tracking discrepancies between scheduled and real-time trains and buses since 2021, finding that train service has been cut by 24 percent. Fabio Göttlicher, the group’s cofounder, is calling for CTA president Dorval Carter Jr. to be fired, for Mayor Brandon Johnson to get directly involved, and for city residents to treat public transportation as a utility – before it’s too late.

Q: Was there a particular incident or situation that led to the creation of Commuters Take Action?

A: Not one single incident, but really just the deterioration of the quality of CTA service starting on the downslope of the COVID pandemic. I’m a software engineer. As I was taking the train throughout 2021, I started noticing trains weren’t coming as often as they used to. Sometimes I’d wait 20 to 25 minutes. So I’d think, How can I use my engineering skills to come up with a way to quantify this? Whenever you use the Ventra app or Google Maps to see when your next trip is coming, it’s potentially from a dataset that’s being continuously published by the CTA. I wrote a program that runs 24 hours a day that keeps tracking the live trains as they come into stations. What I

found, when I first started in December 2021, was that the CTA was running only about 55 to 60 percent of the trains their schedule said they should be running. I started publishing the data in local Facebook groups for transit enthusiasts, on Reddit and other social media. That's how Commuters Take Action started.

Q: There's a petition on your website calling for the firing of the CTA's president. How's that going?

A: The CTA has not been truthful by not informing passengers as much as they could about the changes to their everyday service. In the beginning, we were really hoping that we could have a dialogue with the CTA and work with them. We gave them a chance to fix things.

But years later, there hasn't been much more honesty by the agency. We don't think CTA president Dorval Carter presents himself with much integrity or truthfulness. That's not the kind of leader the CTA needs. A lot of the pressure to get a new president in place has to come from the mayor. Lori Lightfoot and Brandon Johnson – neither of them have really shown much interest in transit. We're just here to keep making noise about it and hope that someone will notice and look into the lack of any progress or competency by Dorval Carter.

Q: Does public transit have an impact on the city's economic growth?

A: Transportation is the backbone of the city. People need to be able to get to their jobs. If you drive in Chicago, you know how frustrating that can be. You get on the Kennedy in the morning and the traffic jams are never-ending. But a lot of people don't take the Blue Line as an alternative because it has failed them too many times. We have spoken to groups that represent some of the biggest companies in Chicago, which are somewhat unexpected allies to us. They're always saying, "If you want Chicago to be an attractive place to run a business, employees need to know that if they move here they have a transit system they can rely on." At O'Hare or Midway, [a tourist's] first impression is a train that should be leaving every six minutes. But if they end up waiting 25 minutes, are they really going to recommend Chicago to their friends to come visit?

Q: Which service is worse, the trains or the buses?

A: On the buses, the percentage of service reduction is not as bad. And it has to do with the CTA training process. Train operator training is a lot more complicated than for a bus operator.

Q: How so?

A: Historically, becoming a CTA rail operator has been a very prestigious job. It pays fairly well. But if you want to become a train operator, you have to start at a lower-paying job, which is usually as a flagger. A flagger is someone who works on the CTA rail tracks in maintenance or construction to ensure safe train passage. The current contract stipulates that you have to be a flagger

for at least a year before you can even start training to be a rail operator. The flagger position doesn't pay nearly as well. So the promise of possibly making a decent amount of money in a year or more is not too good of a prospect to potential job candidates.

Q: Your group says it is "anti-board." What does that mean?

A: The CTA board is composed of seven members, who oversee operations. They have the power to name the president. I've gone to or listened to every single CTA board meeting the past two years. Unfortunately, I think the board members have failed to fulfill their duties of

ensuring that Chicago's transit is in the right hands. They always praise President Carter. They think he's doing a good job, despite the metrics not being there. Most of the board members have no transit background whatsoever. They don't seem knowledgeable enough to be making decisions about the transit agency. It's up to Mayor Johnson to make two appointments for the city board. But so far, he has not done so. Those are two spots that could be filled with qualified people, but the mayor's office has, for whatever reason, not fulfilled its duty.

Q: How can commuters mobilize for change?

A: Chicagoans have come to accept that the CTA has not served them well. We deserve better. The best course of action is to start talking to aldermen. A lot of these decisions rest with the mayor's office. Chicago's transit is in trouble. ■

"We don't think CTA president Dorval Carter presents himself with much integrity or truthfulness. That's not the kind of leader the CTA needs."



Too Little, Too Late

How did the L perform in 2023? Not well, according to CTA data tracked by Commuters Take Action. Only half the trains scheduled arrived on time.

■ **Scheduled trips in 2019 (prepandemic):**
802,331

■ **Scheduled trips in 2023:**
530,924

■ **Actual trips in 2023:¹**
454,051

■ **Trains arriving on time in 2023:²**
267,433

1. Trains that completed at least half their route.
2. Trains arriving within a 25 percent window on either side of their scheduled intervals.

THE TWO-MINUTE GUIDE

The Thompson Center Reboot

Architectural treasure? Taxpayer money pit? Charming fixer-upper? Spaceship? All of the above? Here's what to know about the Googleplexing of Helmut Jahn's opus. By GRACE PERRY

AFTER YEARS OF A metaphorical “For Sale” sign hanging out front, a historical preservation debate, and handwringing over responsible ownership, the Thompson Center – or, shall we say, the Loop Googleplex – has a future. Whatever it'll be called, the new owner has some major renovations to do before its employees report for duty in 2026.

THE RENDERINGS

In 2022, Google announced plans to buy the Thompson Center for \$105 million and use it as a second Chicago HQ to complement its Fulton Market offices. The company's Chicago site leader, Karen Sauder, recently published renderings of the Loop Googleplex, and to this nonarchitect, it looks ... more or less the same as the original Thompson Center! No skyscraper Frankensteined to it, no demolition. The most notable differences: (1) no more signature (and divisive) blue-and-salmon exterior color scheme, (2) an outdoor plaza, and (3) no 10-ton Jean Dubuffet sculpture, which will be relocated three blocks south. Alas, there's no sniff of a food court Sbarro (RIP) in the renderings, but Sauder's blog does reference “opportunities for more food and beverage retail.” One can dream.

THE LEGACY

Sauder says Google intends to “honor the postmodern legacy of the building,” but what that means is not totally clear. The company is not seeking landmark status. But it is partnering with the



building's original architecture firm, once run by the legendary Helmut Jahn and now, after his 2021 death, by his son, Evan. Helmut was dubbed “the Flash Gordon of architecture” for his bombastic style; let's hope Evan is more like Captain Planet.

CHICAGO'S BIGGEST GREENHOUSE

The Gargantuan Structure Formerly Known as the Thompson Center is wildly expensive to heat and cool. At 1.2 million square feet, it essentially functions as a giant greenhouse. (To Jahn's credit, insulated double-paned glass was meant to be used—that was ditched to cut construction costs, naturally.) That means staggering heat and AC bills:

It's estimated the Thompson Center costs \$17 million a year to operate. Hence the need for (at least) \$325 million in renos, the state says. Spend money to save money, you know? But Google appears up for it. Per Sauder's post, the company plans to make the building all-electric and update the heating and cooling systems to handle “Chicago's famously varied seasons.” Quite a diplomatic way to put it. The tech giant has pledged to acquire LEED Platinum certification (that's the best one), joining the ranks of Kanye, Chicago, and Fall Out Boy as certified platinum Chicagoans.

THE FUTURE

A center of civil service transitioning into a private

tech hub understandably gives some Chicagoans the ick. The glass dome once symbolized government transparency; now it nodds to the panopticon of big tech. But from an architectural standpoint, many see this deal as a win. Tech companies have a good track record of restoring historic buildings. That includes Google, which transformed a Howard Hughes airplane hangar into offices in L.A. and made Manhattan's art deco Port Authority Building its own, too. Sauder promises the center will still serve commuters and become a “thriving community destination.” Phew! Because a lack of public access to this postmodern gem would be a loss for Chicago.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (CENTER) GOOGLE; (TOP, BOTTOM) CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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THE REGIMEN

Sonat Birnecker Hart

Liquor mogul,
Saturday unplugged,
reluctant rebounder

By WEB BEHRENS

FORGING NEW PATHS comes naturally to Sonat Birnecker Hart, cofounder of the renowned craft distillery Koval. With a PhD in German cultural history and post-doctorate in Jewish studies, she taught at Berlin's prestigious Humboldt-Universität. But when family roots beckoned her back to Chicago, she says, "whiskey was the solution." She and her husband launched Koval in 2008. Their ambitious plan included lobbying (successfully) to change state laws to permit tours and tastings at their Lake View distillery. The 50-year-old mother of two teens also keeps evolving in terms of how she keeps fit.



HITTING THE BRAKES

"Finding time to unplug is incredibly important. I was practicing it, on and off, my whole life with Shabbat, but it became essential during the pandemic. Taking Friday night to really be present, make a nice meal, play board games, and focus on family—it was so helpful. We've carried that through since. I try not to use my phone or computer on Saturday, and I read a book so I can go to other worlds and times."

HEALTHY DRINKING

"For me, alcohol can elevate a moment. It's like a special-occasion dress or perfume: You don't wear it every day. If you're celebrating something important, when you go back to that moment later in life, you'll remember what you were wearing, what you were drinking, and it becomes a part of your story. But if you abuse it, you take away the magic. There needs to be a balance."

MIGHT AS WELL JUMP

"I used to hate running, but I've found there's real magic when you run outside. In the colder months, I decided to try a rebounder: I have a trampoline at home with a bar I hold on to. I'm still easing into it. After having two children and getting older, I might need to reevaluate jumping as a form of exercise. But I think it's important to try a lot of things. I guess that's another form of wellness: not to get stuck in our ways."

PHOTOGRAPHY: (TRAMPOLINE) ACON USA; (DRINK) CRIS CANTÓN/GETTY IMAGES



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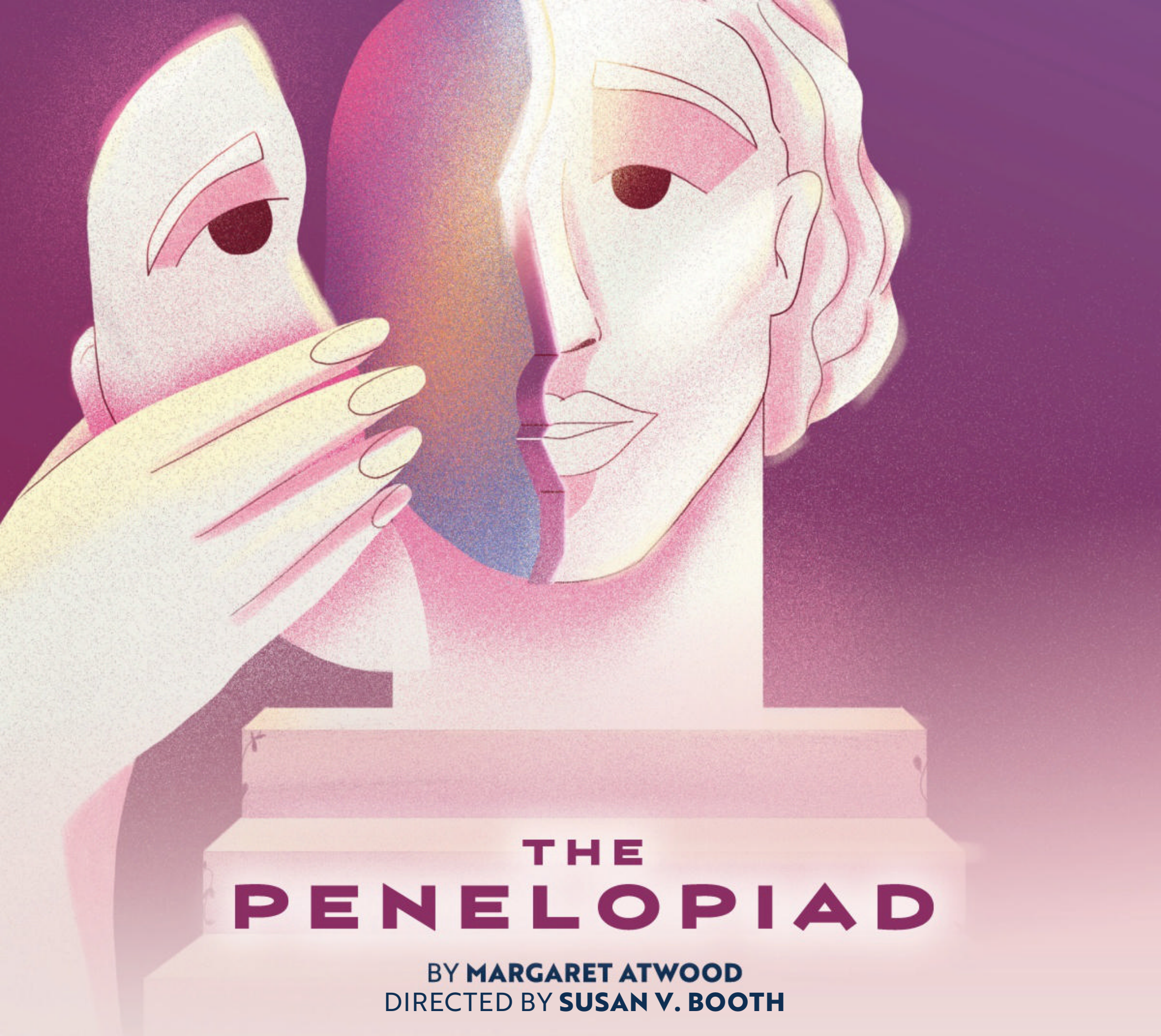
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BY MARGARET ATWOOD
DIRECTED BY SUSAN V. BOOTH

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GO

Harrison McEldowney's New Point of View

After a 10-year stage absence, the celebrated choreographer returns with a modern-tech twist for Trinity Irish Dance. By VICKI CRAIN

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, HARRISON McEldowney was busy at work on a project in the Maldives. There in his role as senior creative director at the Chicago-based consulting company Wilson Dow, he went online for inspiration and stumbled across a video that kindled some dormant artistic embers. It was footage of Burning Man—but the drone filming the event had crashed to the ground, where partygoers had retrieved it and passed around the still-recording robot.

Suddenly, McEldowney, who'd built a celebrated career as a dance choreographer in the 1990s and 2000s before fully transitioning to the corporate world, had an idea. "Everything is through the lens of a camera these days," he says. "Why not take it one step further?" He immediately texted his friend Mark Howard, founding artistic director of Trinity Irish Dance Company in Chicago. Just like that, McEldowney, 61, was ready to create for the stage again.

The result is *P.O.V.*, which debuts March 3 as part of Trinity's annual engagement at the Auditorium Theatre. McEldowney's piece trades the drone for a GoPro camera, which is strapped onto the chest of one of 11 dancers. While they perform, the footage is projected onto a screen above the stage, offering the audience a unique glimpse of what dancers see as they whirl around.

But *P.O.V.* is more than modern-tech gimmickry. "We didn't just put a camera on an existing piece," McEldowney says. Instead, he developed a dance with the video component in mind. His goal was to capture not only the technical precision for which Trinity dancers are known but also their athletic energy and speed. Set to an eclectic score that includes Irish-influenced rock, the piece came together

quickly after the first proof-of-concept rehearsal last August.

It marks a return to form for McEldowney, who grew up in Texas and went on to forge a career dancing and choreographing all over the globe. He arrived in Chicago around 1990, soon joining River North Dance and later designing pieces for Hubbard Street Dance and the Ruth Page Civic Ballet. His other work includes projects as big as choreographing a portion of

included "nuns doing 'The Vatican Rag' and a ballad about a young girl who kills her whole family.")

But eager for new creative challenges, McEldowney gradually switched careers. With the move to Wilson Dow, he traded stage fare for business productions, including some quite grandiose product launches for the tech industry and ship-naming ceremonies for the cruise industry. The last time he choreographed a concert dance was a full decade ago.

"I'm not going to do a piece if I don't have something," he says. "I need an idea."

For his part, Howard always aimed to lure McEldowney back to the stage. He had issued a standing invitation for his friend to return—and all these years later was delighted when McEldowney reached out. "The guy is a genius," says Howard. "My only job was to get him in the room with the dancers."

In addition to *P.O.V.*, the Trinity showcase features a second world premiere, this one choreographed by Howard and the company's associate artistic director, Chelsea Hoy. Deploying a whimsical vaudevillian edge, *Taking the Mick* explores the immigrant experience of reinvention. The title phrase refers to teasing or ridiculing someone, which Howard experienced as a young Irish lad growing up in Rogers Park. "It has subtle themes of social mobil-

ity, one-upmanship, chasing power, struggle, faith, fickleness, and shifting loyalties," he explains.

Combined, the two new pieces are the latest example of how Trinity pushes the genre forward. "Ours is a unique place in the global Irish dance community," says Howard, a 2023 Irish American Hall of Fame inductee. "I'm not interested in mimicry. We're expected to deliver on what's next for the art form." **C**



McEldowney with
Trinity artistic director
Mark Howard

the closing ceremonies of the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

Both rooted in the Chicago dance world, McEldowney and Howard had become drinking buddies. McEldowney first worked with Howard's company in 2003, brainstorming a dance called *The Irish and How They Got That Way*, which parodied Irish history and parables with his signature irreverent humor. (Highlights, as McEldowney recalls,

AGENDA

Top 10 reasons to fill up your calendar this month

By WEB BEHRENS

> GREEK MYTH REMIXED

Author/prophet Margaret Atwood exchanges future dystopias for ancient myths with *The Penelopiad*, a retelling of *The Odyssey* from the perspective of the hero's wife. Mar. 2–31. goodmantheatre.org



> FANTASTIC FOLK

Described glowingly across the pond as “new gods of Irish music,” the all-stars of *Lúnasa* have redefined traditional Celtic rhythms for a quarter century. Mar. 3. oldtownschool.org

> HOME IS WHERE HE WANTS TO BE

In this solo outing, Toad the Wet Sprocket frontman *Glen Phillips* plays songs he wrote during the pandemic shutdown. When touring abruptly ceased, he discovered the joy of staying put. Mar. 7. evanston.space.com



> SHORT VIDS, BIG TALENT

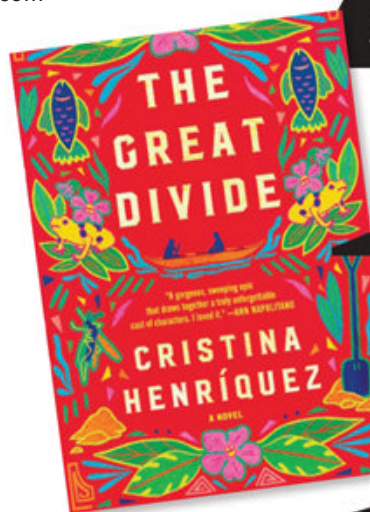
The delightfully demented *90-Second Newbery Film Festival* features student-made shorts inspired by Newbery Medal-winning kids' books. Mar. 9. 90secondnewbery.com

> CANAL FEVER

Cristina Henríquez's latest, *The Great Divide*, uses the building of the Panama Canal as a backdrop. She chats with Rebecca Makkai at Women & Children First. Mar. 12. cristinahenriquez.com

> PUBLIC LIVES, PRIVATE LIES

Steppenwolf's *Purpose* uncovers the secrets of an influential family. It's a showcase for Black theater excellence, including Chicago actor Harry Lennix. Mar. 14–Apr. 21. steppenwolf.org



> PRODIGIOUS PLAYING

Violinist *Amaryn Olmeda* performs on the eve of her 16th birthday, along with composer and vocalist Clarice Assad, in Chicago Sinfonietta's Echo, a program celebrating women in classical music. Mar. 15–16. chicagosinfonietta.org

< VINTAGE STOCK

Technicolor printing was mostly abandoned by Hollywood 50 years ago, but its saturated hues linger. *Technicolor Weekend* at the Gene Siskel Film Center features *Cleopatra Jones*, *The Nutty Professor*, and more. Mar. 15–17. chicagofilmssociety.org



> OH, WHAT A NIGHT

After nearly 20 years, Chicago sees its first homegrown production of *Jersey Boys*. Tapping your toes to this juggernaut jukebox musical seems so right. Mar. 15–May 19. mercurytheaterchicago.com



> MS. ROBOT

Will Big Tech save or doom us? *Kara Swisher*, author of the new *Burn Book: A Tech Love Story*, explores this at a Chicago Humanities appearance. Mar. 21. chicagohumanities.org



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TABLE

The Roots of a Mini Empire

With his fresh take on plant-based dining, Rodolfo Cuadros has built a string of Latin American restaurants.

By LISA SHAMES



WHEN RODOLFO CUADROS first began dating his wife, he wanted to share his culinary skills with her family. The catch? They were vegan. That forced Cuadros to rethink his relationship with meat and cooking, and it gradually reshaped how he ate: “After years of eating like that, you start to look at vegetables in different ways.”

That viewpoint, married with his deep knowledge of Latin American food, influences the restaurants Cuadros has been rapidly opening since 2019, when he debuted Amaru. In 2021, he added Bloom Plant Based Kitchen, followed by Lil Amaru in Time Out Market in 2022. Don Bucio’s Taqueria and Bloom Sushi Counter at XMarket launched in 2023.

Amaru (1904 W. North Ave., Bucktown) is not plant based, but it allowed Cuadros to begin creating his take on Latin food. It tells the story of his growing up Hispanic and American and taps influences from West Africa, Spain, the Caribbean, and South America. Case

in point: octopus with poblano Sriracha sauce paired with spicy Spanish-style potatoes. While Amaru is centered on slow cooking, Lil Amaru (916 W. Fulton Market, West Loop) focuses on the “crispy, crunchy, salty beauty of Latin American street food,” like Cuban sandwiches and fried rockfish tacos. It, too, reflects Cuadros’s upbringing.

Born in New York, he spent most of his childhood in Colombia before returning to the United States in his teens. He first worked as a dishwasher, but as his English improved, so did his status in the kitchen. And when he began working for Miami chef Douglas Rodriguez (a.k.a. the Godfather of Nuevo Latino Cuisine), Cuadros found his calling. “For the first time, I could see myself in what I was cooking,” he says. “It was validation that my culture mattered.”

Cuadros brought that lesson to Chicago, heading up the kitchen at Carnivale for six years before teaming up with business partner Brett Lander. The duo was mulling how to grow beyond

Amaru when the pandemic hit. “I wanted to slowly introduce people to vegetables,” Cuadros says. “But the pandemic forced us to think that if this is something we believe in, then we have to go all in.”

They did, starting with Bloom (1559 N. Milwaukee Ave., Wicker Park), where Cuadros serves daikon bulgogi and yuca gnocchi. Gustavo Ocampo, Cuadros’s Carnivale sous chef, joined for the take-out-only Don Bucio’s (2763 N. Milwaukee Ave., Logan Square), where they’re filling made-to-order tortillas with guajillo-braised jackfruit “birria.” And at Bloom Sushi (804 W. Montrose Ave., Uptown), Latin-Japanese mash-ups include seaweed salad with cactus and cilantro.

Cuadros’s forward-thinking cuisine has garnered praise—he was a 2022 James Beard semifinalist for best chef in the Great Lakes region and earned a Michelin Bib Gourmand for Bloom. So what’s next? “I’d like to slow down,” he says. “Our kids are getting older, and we want to make sure we don’t miss it all in the pursuit of the American dream.” 

Throwback Tipples

At the new bar Golden Years, the '70s are alive and well.

By AMY CAVANAUGH

ZACH RIVERA FELT LIKE HE'D entered a time warp when he first walked into the space that would eventually become his new cocktail bar, Golden Years. "It gave me the feeling of the '70s," he says. "It had wood paneling and exposed brick. It led me to put some music together, and that kicked off everything else."

A collaboration among Rivera and Christina Chae, both of Moonflower, and Georg Simos and Alex Tsolakides of High Dive and Dante's Pizzeria, Golden Years takes as its muse the pre-Reagan era. That means you're listening to Joe Cocker, Steely Dan, and the Rolling Stones while snacking on wedge salads and club sandwiches. Rivera carries the theme into the drinks menu, too. "I wanted to put together a list of cocktails from the '70s or using ingredients from that time—Galliano, orange juice, brandy, and cognac were huge—in addition to older cocktails that people are still drinking or that have gained popularity again, like the highball."

He turns these old-school elements on their head by serving concoctions like the Florida, with grapefruit juice, sloe gin, Galliano, and a blend of red bitters. Says Rivera: "I didn't want to be as on the nose as a Harvey Wallbanger." 1938 W. Chicago Ave., East Ukrainian Village



THREE COCKTAILS TO TRY

22° Highball

"This is my favorite drink on the menu," says Rivera. "I rigged up a freezer with a temperature controller, and 22 degrees was the magic number: The sparkling water does not freeze in the bottle, but once you pour it, it freezes in the glass. We top that with Japanese whisky, which is also carbonated and kept in the freezer. Every single thing is as frozen and carbonated as possible."

Singapore

"Carbonated components were really popular at the time, but when I was working on this drink, the carbonation was diluting it in an unpleasant way. So this is a Singapore without the sling. I also swapped in pisco since we had a lot of gin on the menu already. It came together really well."

Boricua Stinger

"Stingers were big during that time, but all the recipes are too sweet or simple or there's a bunch of dairy. I wanted to bring more complexity to it. I made a Puerto Rican spin that uses Malta, this earthy, molasses soda. There's brandy, rum, and a splash of Fernet, and it's topped with Malta egg cream."

THIS MONTH'S OBSESSION

Grilled Shellfish Parrillada at El Che Steakhouse & Bar

■ I love John Manion's El Che Steakhouse & Bar for many reasons. The service is always great. The cocktails and wine are top tier. It's also, in my opinion, the best seafood restaurant in town, which I realize is an odd thing to say about a steakhouse. But I'm not the only one who appreciates the nonbovine offerings: Thanks to the viral wonders of TikTok, the grilled shellfish parrillada has become a must-order. Out comes a tray of oysters, head-on shrimp, scallops, and lobster tails cooked over live fire and dressed with garlicky chile butter. Your server dumps hot, crisp french fries on top, followed by more butter. It's dramatic—hence TikTok—but it's also delicious and great for a group. "I was like, if I ate here, what would I want to indulge in?" Manion says. "It's meant to be over the top and fun." Mission accomplished. \$210. 845 W. Washington Blvd., West Loop—A.C.



REVIEW

The Heart of Ukraine

At Anelya, Johnny Clark taps his familial roots for a menu that's unlike any other in town. By JOHN KESSLER



Zakusky tower

YOU NEED TO TRY THE banosh," said Elizabeth, our Ukrainian friend. "This is something typical from the west." The menu described the cheesy porridge as "Carpathian grits," and I was sold, having never met a grit I didn't like.

My wife and I met Elizabeth (anglicized from Yelyzaveta) through friends of friends in the spring of 2022, shortly after she fled Kharkiv at the start of the war and settled in Chicago. She lived briefly in our garden apartment. We kept in touch with her and could think of no one better to invite to Anelya, the new Ukrainian restaurant from Johnny Clark and Beverly Kim, the husband-and-wife team behind Parachute.

During the meal, she was up and down from her seat, talking to the many Ukrainians on staff—everyone from Milena, the young host from Donetsk, to chef Clark, who named the restaurant for his grandmother, also from Kharkiv. Last year, he traveled to that city, just 20 miles from the Russian border, and got to know a chef for whom Elizabeth had done some branding work. After dinner, my wife and I retreated to the bar to give them time to share photos and say goodbye with a hug.

Hugs are not uncommon at Anelya. Since opening in October, it has become a meeting place for Ukrainians and Ukrainian Americans. Clark and Kim sought out Ukrainian workers, taking the time to train those with no restaurant

experience. The flowing emotion here, more than shared trauma, is about heritage asserting itself in a time of duress. When a culture is under attack, artists turn to its vernacular roots to find creative expression, and that is what Clark and Kim have done here.

In terms of culinary ambition, design, service, and sheer will, Anelya is a captivating aesthetic object and, I'd venture, one of the most significant restaurants to open here or anywhere this past year. It's also an exciting place to eat, with a menu of more than 30 items, from fresh pastas and cured meats to house ferments and fancy cakes. Over two visits, I sometimes wanted the food to be a little homier, a little less expensive, a little more stop-you-in-your-tracks delicious. Yet I loved it all the same for its brash, creative energy.

What's even more astonishing is how Clark and Kim launched it on the fly. Last May, they shuttered their previous restaurant at this site, Wherewithall, after a collapsed city sewer line left it without plumbing. Clark, whose interest in the Ukrainian part of his heritage had been awakened by the war, had recently returned from a research trip armed with cookbooks. Working with their designer, Charlie Vinz, they gave the room the sparse, industrial look Clark saw in Kyiv's trendier dining spaces. China plates decorate the walls, and multicolored lights cast a moody glow and render the food blessedly un-Instagrammable.

Ukrainians, like Russians, often begin meals with zakusky—cured fish, salads, charcuterie, pickles, and other cold bites spread out on the table and ready to wash down with vodka. Clark and team have reimagined this tradition into a groovy cocktail hour. The Eastern European drinks are like nothing anywhere else. Try a honey-sweetened, horseradish-infused vodka, or the Lights Are Blazing, a cocktail with Bosnian rosemary brandy, sherry, and smoked pear. Order a deliciously alive Georgian Tilsima orange wine aged in the traditional earthenware amphora, or keep Dry January going with the best drink on the menu, a nonalcoholic kvass



Johnny Clark



Sturgeon meatballs

that's made in-house from fermented rye bread and tastes kind of like birch beer. (Grandma Anelya used to make hers with leftover bread and brown sugar in an old pickle jar.)

Drinks delivered, the server rolled over a three-tiered cart with canapés. Maybe you need nothing more than a trout roe tartelette (a one-bite masterpiece) or a jar of smoked carrot pashtet (pâté) with toast. Or maybe you want a nosh-o-rama: fantastic egg mayo outfitted with anchovy and nigella seeds, house-cured herring, a puck of kholodets, a.k.a. jellied head cheese that any Southerner would recognize. Enjoy while you peruse the menu, which is filled with so many unfamiliar words your head will swim.

In fact, I wish there had been some liner notes to contextualize the menu. Some dishes are hyperregional or specific to ethnic groups, others common to both Ukraine and Russia, and still others from the chefs' imaginations. Elizabeth and the server gamely answered my 463 questions, and we feasted. There's much to love, starting with plump varenyky dumplings filled with potato and bathed in the silkiest saffron butter sauce. Diced smoked jowl bacon adds pops of porky goodness. Sturgeon meatballs

nestle alongside buttery mash under a rich tomato sauce. I also have good news for fans of Parachute's late, great pressed broccoli salad: A version with green raisins and baharat appears here. It's a gem.

Others dishes intrigue but don't push the yum button. Borscht with duck confit and smoked pear lacks brightness. (It's also \$20.) Vegan mushroom holubtsi (stuffed cabbage) doesn't have much to say, and its clumpy coconut cream sauce further confuses matters. Desserts, such as a Kyiv cake layered with icebox-hard buttercream and meringue, seem like the earnest creations of culinary students.

The banosh turned out to be less like grits than a super-rich polenta enriched with smetana, Ukraine's tangy sour cream, but worth a try. A woman in the kitchen named Ivanna prepares it exactly as she did back home. I respect Clark for leaving well enough alone. He is learning and tuning in to tradition as he engages this fervent cultural moment that has blossomed in response to war. The émigrés and refugees here are showing him what to do, how to move forward as the world pays attention. I feel he and Kim have created more than a restaurant at Anelya. It's kind of a work of agitprop. Maybe even a work of art. 

ANELYA



3472 N. Elston Ave.,
Avondale

■ **Dinner for two**
\$250

■ **Tip** The all-Eastern European wine list holds a lot of bottles you won't find elsewhere. Explore.

★ Recommended

★★ Very good ★★★ Excellent

★★★★ Exceptional

NEIGHBORHOOD FIND

Island Time

MANO MODERN CAFE

851 N. Ashland Ave., West Town

■ **Perfect order** Pan de Slider with Spam, ube latte

■ No cuisine has taken off in Chicago in recent years quite like Filipino. Among other spots, there is Boonie's and its homey flavors. There is Kasama and its lines out the door. Now joining them is Mano Modern Cafe, a corner joint with big ambitions. The team of five owners, including Melvin Reyes, who has restaurant consulting experience, doesn't just want to succeed in Chicago—they have their eyes on one day expanding Mano into a national chain.

Early signs are good. You can swing by this all-day café and coffee shop, which opened in November, for lattes made with ube or pandan, or settle in for easygoing Filipino comfort food (this is also a fine place to work on your laptop). Breakfast bowls come loaded with garlic rice, a fried egg, and your choice of longanisa, tocino, or Spam. They're good, but it's the other use of Filipino meats you should try first: Pan de Sliders, breakfast sandwiches served on pan de sal, rolls with a pillowy texture and light golden crust. Get the one stuffed with a slice of fried Spam, an over-easy egg, American cheese, and bang bang sauce, which has a creamy punch of salty, sweet, and savory flavors (\$6). It's now my favorite breakfast sandwich in the city.

The hits continue with Mano's lunch and dinner menu. The crispy lumpia (\$7) and hearty Pinoy beef stew with carrots and potato over garlic rice (\$11) further prove that the Mano team just might be onto something.

—TITUS RUSCITTI



Pan de Slider with Spam

Make a Splash



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The Hot List

10 places everyone's talking about (in order of heat)

1 MAXWELLS TRADING

What Erling Wu-Bower and Josh Tilden, late of the dearly departed Pacific Standard Time, are back with this airy Kinzie Industrial Corridor restaurant. **Why** Sample Wu-Bower and Christopher Jung's genre-defying cuisine, like spicy braised lamb pasta with chile crunch or French onion dip with scallion pancakes, while sipping riffs on classic cocktails. **Where** 1516 W. Carroll Ave., West Loop



Fazzoletti

2 BISOUS **What** Inspired by 1960s Paris, the cocktail bar is a sister to Sparrow, the Gold Coast rum bar. **Why** Mark this pretty, elegant spot down for your next martini date. **Where** 938 W. Fulton Market, West Loop

3 CARIÑO **What** Chef Norman Fenton (Brass Heart) helms this fine-dining venture, with tasting menus and a taco omakase. **Why** Sample an expansive look at Latin flavors (also, tacos are fun). **Where** 4662 N. Broadway, Uptown

4 SIGNATURE **What** A new high-end sports bar from the unlikely duo of chef Stephen Gillanders (S.K.Y.) and former Chicago Bears defensive end Israel Idonije. **Why** Even if you're not a sports fan, you can get behind short rib nachos with cherry tomato pico de gallo. **Where** 1312 S. Wabash Ave., South Loop

5 RAMOVA GRILL & TAPROOM **What** The Ramova Theatre gets a new life as a music venue, brewery, and restaurant. **Why** Kevin Hickey (Duck Inn) slings chili, fried mortadella, and much more. **Where** 3520 S. Halsted St., Bridgeport

6 LEMON **What** A sleek new bar and venue from a crew of industry vets, including Jeremy Owen Barrett (Billy Sunday). **Why** Pop in for a mojito or boilermaker, and take in some jazz. **Where** 1600 W. Grand Ave., West Town

7 OLIO E PIÙ **What** An outpost of the New York Italian eatery, the first of three planned projects from the Group. **Why** The cozy trattoria offers artichoke-stuffed pasta and all manner of crudo. **Where** 445 N. Dearborn St., River North

8 CHI-LATIN **What** A casual tavern from Fredy Orellana (Dell' Rooster, MK) that explores the diversity of Latin America. **Why** Snack on popcorn shrimp with hot sauce alongside mezcal mojitos. **Where** 1421 W. Chicago Ave., West Town

9 PIEROGI KITCHEN **What** A husband-and-wife duo taps into their Polish heritage. **Why** Smoked brisket pierogi, anyone? Round out your order with pickled herring and zurek. **Where** 1856 W. North Ave., Bucktown

10 HONEY BUTTER FRIED CHICKEN **What** Heads up, North Shore fried chicken lovers: The beloved city joint has arrived near you. **Why** Get the savory-sweet bird, and don't miss the pimento mac and cheese. **Where** 668 Vernon Ave., Glencoe



MARTIN SORGE'S BLACK EMMER CARROT CAKE
Makes 8 to 10 servings
Active time 30 minutes
Total time 2 hours 30 minutes

IN THE KITCHEN

Flour Power

S EASONAL INGREDIENTS LIKE Midwestern rhubarb and exotic citrus have long inspired Chicago's own *Great American Baking Show* winner, Martin Sorge. But as his skills flourished, he began exploring beyond the produce department. "I discovered the array of grains and flours that could add flavor to my creations," he says. "I also discovered Janie's Mill, a farm and grain mill in Ashkum, Illinois." On a recent tour there, Sorge was struck by the beauty of a stark black stalk of emmer, an ancient wheat variety with Middle Eastern roots and a nutty earthiness that perfectly complements warm spices, prompting this cozy take on classic carrot cake. —CATE HUGUELET

1

Toast the pecans: Heat the oven to 350 degrees. Spread pecans on a baking tray and toast in the oven until deeply fragrant, 10 to 12 minutes. Cool pecans completely, then chop finely and set aside.

2

Make the cake: Grease and line two 8-inch cake pans with parchment paper. In a large bowl, combine baking powder, spices, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, brown sugar, and 1 cup granulated sugar. Add eggs and vanilla and whisk for 1 minute. Add butter, oil, and ginger and whisk another minute to emulsify. Gently whisk in flour. With a rubber spatula, fold in carrots and half of the pecans. Evenly divide the batter between the pans. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the cake's center comes out clean, 32 to 38 minutes. Cool cakes for 20 minutes, then invert onto racks, removing pans and liners, to cool completely.

3

Make the frosting: In a stand mixer, whisk cream cheese, vanilla paste, and remaining sugar and salt on medium speed until well combined, 2 to 3 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. With the mixer at medium, gradually stream in the cream. Continue whipping until the frosting thickens and holds a peak, about 1 minute.

4

Assemble the cake: Daub a tablespoon of frosting on a serving platter and set a cake layer on it. With a butter knife, evenly spread a cup of frosting across the cake. Center the second cake on top. Spread the remaining frosting over the top and down the sides. Press the remaining pecans into the cake's sides to coat. To finish, swirl the frosting on top of the cake with the back of a spoon.

- 3 cups raw pecan halves
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. freshly ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp. ground ginger
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. fine sea salt, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dark brown sugar
- 2 cups granulated sugar, divided
- 3 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, melted and cooled
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup neutral oil
- 1 Tbsp. freshly grated ginger
- 2 cups black emmer flour, like Janie's Mill brand
- 3 cups loosely packed, finely grated carrots (about 2 large carrots)
- 1 lb. cream cheese
- 2 tsp. vanilla paste
- $1\frac{1}{3}$ cups whipping cream



**CARRIE
NAHABEDIAN**
CHEF AND
CO-OWNER
OF BRINDILLE



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& CHEF
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OF MONTEVERDE
RESTAURANT
& PASTIFICIO



**CHRISHON
LAMPLEY**
LOVE CORK
SCREW
WINES



**TIGIST
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O

IN THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF THE FIVE-WAY INTER-section of Fuller and Loomis Streets and Archer Avenue in Bridgeport is a prototypical Chicago apartment building. The three-story structure is modest in scale, its bricks various shades of sandy brown and reddish orange, with a series of helix-shaped accents crowning the façade. Today, the structure is nondescript, unassuming: a Chicago apartment complex, nothing more, nothing less.

When I first saw the building in August 2020, after my partner and I moved to Bridgeport from the North Side, there was more. On the ground floor, storefront signage – maroon lettering on creamy peach tiles – promised passersby “Ice Cream” and “Drugs,”

offerings once made by R.V. Kunka Pharmacy, a neighborhood drugstore. Even though the shop no longer existed, that distinctive lettering – asymmetrical and curvy, the K’s formed by a thick stem, a squat lower arm, and a slender, almost half-U-shaped upper arm – was a welcome sight in my new neighborhood, a reminder that I had moved to a place with real history.

Yet it was not long for the world: By that October, the display had been painted over, and soon any indication of the building’s history had been stripped bare, the exterior made generic for whatever new business might wish to move in. The loss of the R.V. Kunka storefront is one of countless stories we could tell about how the city changes; whether you’ve called Chicago home for five years or 50, you’ve seen things come and go, from single buildings to entire blocks. But still, seeing that signage removed, leaving behind only some tan-colored bricks that were beneath it, left me with an unexpected feeling of mournfulness.

So I was delighted when I discovered that some tangible form of the old sign lived on, at least in the creative imagination of artist Steve Shanabruch. For Shanabruch, best known for the series of Chicago neighborhood prints he began in 2013, that kind of cultural memory has always been important. Today, his prints – faux tourism placards for dozens of neighborhoods and Chicago landmarks, inspired by WPA-style travel posters – are beloved around the city, with nearly 70 available for purchase. But that is only a part of the work Shanabruch has undertaken to celebrate Chicago and its inhabitants. To honor places like R.V. Kunka and other idiosyncratic pieces of the city’s fabric, Shanabruch has turned to an underappreciated facet of Chicago’s history for inspiration: typography.

THE STOREFRONT THAT FIRST CAUGHT SHANABRUCH’S EYE was once lost to history. Starsiak Clothing, a humble suit shop that opened in 1916 at the Polish Triangle on Milwaukee Avenue, at Division Street and Ashland Avenue, lasted for 65 years, run by two generations of Starsiaks who made clothing for the Polish population once prevalent in the neighborhood. In 2005, the storefront was rented out

Granville Picture Framing and Gallery Arts closed in 2017, but its signage served as a source for one of Steve Shanabruch’s fonts.



History Rewritten

A Portage Park illustrator preserves Chicago’s past one letter at a time.

By ANNIE HOWARD

to Espace, an athletic shoe store, and when it went out of business in 2018, the removal of its metallic sign revealed the original Starsiak logo underneath.

Shanabruch, an illustrator with no formal typographic training, was one of many people captivated by the rediscovered sign, with its heavy rounded type. So he decided to re-create it. Armed with a handful of new digital brushes and textures he'd bought on Adobe Illustrator, he started playing around with lettering, teasing the idea of building a full-fledged typeface based on the sign. The words "Starsiak Clothing" contain just a dozen letters of the alphabet (including the all-important *S*, probably the logo's most memorable letter, which looks like a circle sliced at an upward 45-degree angle), so designing an entire font required Shanabruch to improvise the remaining characters. But he enjoyed the challenge, and his typeface, simply and fittingly named Starsiak, came together over the next few months, comprising 91 different glyphs, or unique characters, including 12 alternate letters (mostly letters like *A*, *B*, *D*, and others with the white space filled in), and 38 punctuation marks.

Shanabruch released Starsiak in the summer of 2019. A year later, he released another typeface, Carbit, inspired by a Carbit Paints sign on a demolished building in Humboldt Park. Since then, he's released 11 more fonts, all of them sourced from typography around Chicago – and painstakingly designed one character at a time.

It's an iterative, intuitive undertaking, Shanabruch says. He chops up different letters into new combinations, with the letters *A*, *O*, *H*, and *R* proving especially useful for disassembly. His process happens exclusively on Adobe Illustrator, and if you look at his digital workbook for the Starsiak font, you see that some characters emerged in one or two attempts, while the letter *G* took 10 tries.

Shanabruch, 42, was born in Beverly and has been in Chicago his whole life, except for the three and a half years he lived on the West Coast after graduating

from St. Xavier University in Mount Greenwood. He and his wife moved back to Chicago in 2008 and now call Portage Park home. His fonts project has become a pleasant diversion when he needs a respite from his day job creating designs for local nonprofits – it offers a different sort of mental challenge.

Art deco logos like Starsiak work well in this exercise. "It's my favorite kind of style – it's pretty geometric, and you see a lot of repetitive shapes," Shanabruch says. And that repetition offers lots of stylistic handholds to build on in creating a full font. "It's kind of guesswork and how you think things will look, and if they're

The fonts are a way to rekindle a spark of community memory, preserving the small flash of recognition that can bring a place back in the mind's eye, if not in brick and steel.

not perfect, I don't really care. If everything looks fine together, I'm happy."

Shanabruch takes his inspiration from photographs, both archival and contemporary. Several designs started with suggestions by fellow Chicago history enthusiasts on Twitter. Of the 13 fonts he has completed so far, which are free to download from his website (thechicagoneighborhoods.com), all but two were drawn from text at a specific place. One of those two, Park District, is a nod to the midcentury green entrance signs in many of the city's parks; the other, Snickers, a design based on a vintage advertisement for the candy bar, is a tribute to the recently shuttered Mars

Wrigley factory in Galewood, a Spanish Revival-style structure built in 1929 that may soon become a city landmark.

As for the 11 other fonts, many can still be found in the wild, making for a fun game of city observation; just a few weeks back, on my way from Humboldt Park to Rogers Park, I spotted Shanabruch's latest source, the Western Automatic Music building at Berteau and Western Avenues, which informed a font, Automatic, that he released last June. But the city can change quickly. Many of the fonts capture endangered signage promoting long-gone businesses like Granville Picture Framing and Gallery Arts, which closed in 2017 after almost 90 years, a place that anchored the community for generations. The fate of its last vestige is unclear.

"I assume somebody's going to move in there at some point and take the sign down, because why do they want a picture framing name on their building when they're not a picture frame place?" Shanabruch says. "Especially in this day and age, a lot of people don't appreciate the history, but 20 years from now, maybe the next person in that space would be like, 'Oh man, that would have been so cool to still have it on the spot.'"

IF YOU'RE NOT A CITY NOSTALGIST, YOU might be wondering, What's the big fuss? Shanabruch admits his obsessive interest in Chicago history, laser-focused on decades-old typographic details that many people would hardly give a second glance, is not widely shared. But for those with the same passion for the city's design history, there's an appreciation for what he's created and a recognition that proliferating these bits of Chicago lore is a worthy task.

As the author Alexandra Horowitz writes in her book *On Looking*, which explores different ways we can see anew city blocks that have become too familiar: "Just as architectural styles identify a city, so too is a city recognizable by the type of lettering that predominates. Putting aside the rash of newer, computer-font signs now topping identical

cell-phone stores and delis, the lettering that exists and remains on buildings represents when a city was built, how it has evolved, and whether that evolution involved destruction or restoration.”

Learning to read and appreciate storefront signs, registering their unique properties and what they might say about the city’s past, allows us to dig a level deeper, conferring unexpected insight. For those who use Shanabruch’s fonts, as I’ve done in zines, on invites, and even on my business card, his work honors a changing city, showing appreciation for Chicago’s singular charm. While the neighborhood prints have gathered more attention, his typefaces are a way to capture the city despite its ephemeral nature, a way to rekindle a spark of community memory, preserving the small flash of recognition that can bring a place back in the mind’s eye, if not in brick and steel.

“Growing up, you take things for granted, and then one day they’re gone,” Shanabruch says. “You remember that cool sign, that cool restaurant, and even if it wasn’t anything of great value or whatever in your life, at least you could go by it and see it, and it would be part of your existence.”

The R.V. Kunka Pharmacy served its last customer in 2009, as the neighborhood establishment was crowded out by CVS and Walgreens. Shanabruch almost scrapped the font honoring the store, shelving it for six months as he struggled to re-create its intricacies to his liking before he figured out a workable design, which he released in June 2021. And while I caught only a glimpse of the storefront in 2020, a welcoming neighborhood presence now lost to history, I know its legacy is just a few clicks away, there to help conjure whatever city tale might come next. 



Storefronts from Englewood (above) to West Town (right) have inspired Shanabruch’s typefaces.



The Power

Who's in
charge here?
These **heavy**
hitters know
how to use
their **influence**
to make things
happen in
Chicago and
beyond.

RANKINGS BY *Chicago* editors
TEXT BY Edward Robert McClelland
INTERVIEWS BY Mike Thomas
PHOTOGRAPHY BY Alexander Gouletas

50

1

J.B. Pritzker

ILLINOIS GOVERNOR

Pritzker isn't just the king of Illinois. When crises hit, he's shown that he runs the show in Chicago, too. During the pandemic, he preempted local officials, including Mayor Lightfoot, to close restaurants and schools. More recently, when Mayor Johnson attempted to establish a refugee camp in Brighton Park, the state shut it down, saying the land was contaminated. Point, Pritzker. Meanwhile, he has consolidated his power over the state Democratic Party. In 2022, he successfully pushed to get an ally elected party chair. That same year, he gave \$5.5 million to Democratic state candidates, helping maintain his party's supermajorities in both legislative chambers—and guaranteeing their loyalty. He's used his control over state government to make Illinois a bastion of progressivism. He has aggressively expanded abortion rights, entrenching a post-Roe haven of access. He approved an assault weapons ban that survived a legal challenge, beating back the gun lobby. He also helped attract the Democratic National Convention to Chicago by promising to raise enough money so the \$80 million to \$100 million event wouldn't leave the party in debt. Can the governor go higher? His Think Big America PAC is supporting abortion-rights ballot measures around the country, and he has become a key surrogate for President Biden's reelection campaign. And with his political influence stronger than ever and his progressive policy successes mounting, even the notion of *President Pritzker* doesn't seem all that far-fetched.



2

Brandon Johnson

CHICAGO MAYOR

After his upset victory over Paul Vallas in April, Johnson set out to build the most progressive administration Chicago has ever seen. He hasn't hesitated to shove aside anyone who gets in the way. When Alderperson Scott Waguespack, a Lori Lightfoot supporter, tried to reorganize the City Council without the mayor's input, Johnson dumped him from the finance committee chairmanship, replacing him with an ally. And in August, the mayor fired the popular public health commissioner Allison Arwady, because she disagreed with his plan to reopen public-run mental health clinics. His first legislative victory was a measure to pay tipped servers the full minimum wage, which passed over the initial objections of the restaurant lobby thanks to the City Council coalition of socialists and alderpersons who owe him their committee chairmanships. But Johnson didn't get that done by brute force alone: He crafted a compromise giving restaurants five years to phase out the tipped minimum wage, a deal that got the Illinois Restaurant Association on board. He also persuaded the council to place his Bring Chicago Home ordinance, which would increase taxes on million-dollar real estate sales to raise funds to combat homelessness, on this month's ballot, despite opposition from real estate interests. Get used to Johnson. Unlike Lightfoot, he *enjoys* being mayor.

3

Toni Preckwinkle

COOK COUNTY BOARD PRESIDENT

Yes, she failed as a mayoral candidate because of her lack of charisma and connections to Ed Burke, and her soda tax imploded spectacularly, but the power of Preckwinkle, who also chairs the Cook County Democratic Party, is as kingmaker. She has succeeded in placing her protégés all over local government. She helped Brandon Johnson, in his first foray into politics, win a county board seat against incumbent Richard Boykin (a bit of revenge for his voting against her tax), and she endorsed Johnson during the mayoral runoff, giving him crucial establishment support. In her own 4th Ward, she engineered the appointment of Alderperson Sophia King; when King then ran for mayor, she went around introducing King's eventual replacement, Lamont Robinson, as her preferred candidate. She is also State's



Attorney Kim Foxx's political godmother. A longtime opponent of cash bail, she campaigned successfully for the Pretrial Fairness Act, which eliminated the practice throughout Illinois.



4

Stacy Davis Gates

CHICAGO TEACHERS UNION PRESIDENT

No one else is as responsible for Brandon Johnson's ascendancy as Davis Gates. Johnson began his mayoral campaign armed with the CTU's endorsement, and the ground game of the union's political arm, United Working Families, carried him into office. But Davis Gates is a force in her own right. She leads the most powerful teachers' union in the country, and the contract she helped fight for in 2019 (when she was vice president) secured groundbreaking concessions such as smaller class sizes and a nurse and social worker in every school. Davis Gates is often by Johnson's side at public events related to education, but the extent of her sway over him these days can be a touchy subject. "I'm the mayor of the City of Chicago," Johnson reminded NBC-5 last summer. The true test will come with the looming teacher contract negotiations, but Davis Gates is already securing victories without bargaining: Johnson gave 12 weeks of parental leave to Chicago Public Schools employees, the same as for other city workers.

5

Dick Durbin

U.S. SENATOR

Durbin, now in his fifth term, is an Illinois institution—and he's at the apex of his power. He is Senate majority whip, the second most powerful Democrat in the body, but more important, he is chairman of the Judiciary Committee. He led the confirmation of Supreme Court justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, and as of the end of last year, he had shepherded through the Senate the approval of 166 of Biden's judicial nominees. He's not afraid to do some strong-arming, either: To advance two judges out of committee, he ignored Republican complaints that he was shutting down debate. With the House of Representatives under Republican control, making the passage of major legislation less likely, the Biden administration will prioritize continuing to reshape the federal judiciary with liberal jurists in this election year, an initiative that will have generational effects. Durbin is the person responsible for getting it done.



KENNEDY BARTLEY

No. 14

The day I started at United Working Families, in August 2019, the first thing I did was go to a coalition meeting about the City of Chicago budget. I kind of was just thrown into it. Former executive director Emma Tai put a ton of trust in me, this young organizer, to create a coalition of labor, elected officials, and community groups to say, “Look, these are things that we specifically care about. How do we narrow that down to five key budget demands? How do we have elected officials who will hold the line on those demands? And how do we have a coalition of labor and community groups who will say, ‘Even if I win my demand, I’m going to stay at the table fighting for yours?’”

I can’t credit anything but my relationships and the time I spent. I had so many one-on-ones. I sat in every budget department meeting. It’s the ability to talk to everyone and see a middle ground. It’s the same model we used all the way through the very last budget coalition we pulled together for the fiscal year 2022. Any pride I take in my influence is because it’s used to bring the most good to the most people.



DANNY WIRTZ

No. 30

During COVID, when I was appointed president of the Blackhawks, I realized very quickly that I had to figure out what was happening in the organization. I had to navigate the pandemic. I had to keep the lights on. I had to keep us heading in the right direction. There were financial and structural decisions to make for the short term. We had to determine how we were going to restart our season in a bubble in Edmonton. At the same time, we had to reset the vision of the organization from a longer-term post-pandemic standpoint and hire a leadership team to get us there.

Operating for most of my career in B2B businesses, I had made decisions and lived in a less public way. I'm in a position now that's very public, so decisions are amplified. As someone who sometimes operates from an impostor syndrome standpoint, it was about realizing that I had both the influence and the support to do this. I feel comfortable that I don't have to be Rocky 2.0. Hopefully, I'm taking all the great qualities of my dad and then bringing out the things that I'm good at uniquely.





Dick Uihlein
REPUBLICAN DONOR

Since Ken Griffin and Bruce Rauner left town, Uihlein has been the Republicans' top sugar daddy in Illinois. No amount of cash is likely to turn this state red—certainly not the \$50 million that the Schlitz heir and founder of shipping supplies giant Uline spent trying to get Darren Bailey elected governor. But there's little doubt Uihlein, who lives in Lake Bluff, has helped push the party further right, and not just in Illinois: He was the largest Republican donor *in the nation* in 2022; he and his wife, Liz, contributed nearly \$90 million to groups and candidates, many of them 2020 election deniers. Despite some high-profile defeats (like the attempt to thwart Ohio's referendum to enshrine abortion access in its constitution), there's no denying that Uihlein's brand of conservatism is the dominant strain of the Republican Party. And that might be his greatest victory.



Austan Goolsbee
FEDERAL RESERVE
BANK OF CHICAGO PRESIDENT

Inflation is the primary economic concern of Americans these days, and Goolsbee is among the small group of economic policymakers responsible for stopping it. The former chair of Barack Obama's Council of Economic Advisers was appointed to head the Chicago Fed in December 2022. He sits on the Federal Open Market Committee, which directs the nation's monetary policy, and has made it his mission to bring inflation down to 2 percent—without triggering a recession. He also wants to see interest rates cut this year, though he's been careful not to overpromise. "I think that he's somebody that's going to have some heft for a couple of years," says a business journalist.

8

Lukas Walton
PHILANTHROPIST
AND INVESTOR

Worth nearly \$23 billion, the 37-year-old heir to the Walmart fortune is the richest man in Illinois now that Ken Griffin is gone. Walton's name isn't plastered all over Chicago like Griffin's, but he is deploying his vast wealth for maximum impact. In 2021, he started Builders Vision, which focuses on addressing social and environmental challenges—namely by promoting healthy oceans, sustainable agriculture, and clean energy—through philanthropy and responsible investing. Builders Vision has so far invested or donated \$3 billion, including in Growing Home, the only USDA-certified organic farm in Chicago, and People for Community Recovery, a local environmental justice group. A 2023 impact report bragged that Builders Vision has developed more than 170 sustainable products or technologies, installed 15,685 megawatts of renewable energy capacity, and poured funds into nearly 450 startups, portfolio companies, and fund managers.



9
Jason Lee
MAYORAL ADVISER

Lee has been described as "the mastermind" behind his boss. "Nothing happens without Jason Lee being in on it," a political observer says. His voice is the mayor's voice: If reporters want to know what Johnson is thinking, they call Lee. The 38-year-old isn't afraid to get his hands dirty: He tried twisting Alderperson Bill Conway's arm by offering to remove homeless encampments in the West Loop in exchange for votes for Johnson's projects (Conway didn't bite). The son of Texas congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, he graduated from Harvard and worked as an investment banker at Morgan Stanley. Then he attended a labor conference in Chicago and begged Johnson for a job as a CTU organizer. Now their offices are down the hall from each other on the fifth floor.

10

Anne Caprara
GOVERNOR'S
CHIEF OF STAFF

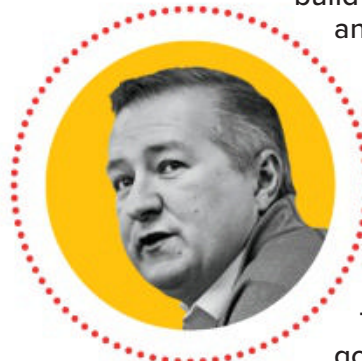
She was chief of staff for two members of Congress before she even turned 30. Then, after heading Priorities USA, the largest Democratic Party super PAC during the 2016 election, she took over J.B. Pritzker's 2018 gubernatorial campaign. Now she has gone from running Pritzker's campaign to running Pritzker himself. "She's the one who decides his political thinking," says one political insider. "I think she probably directs on what he should be doing for any progressive cause out there. She's very smart. She should be running a national campaign." And she very well might—if Pritzker one day runs for president.



11

Tom Ricketts
CHICAGO CUBS CHAIRMAN

After buying the Cubs in 2009, the Ricketts family set out, under Tom's leadership, to modernize a team best known as lovable losers who played in a quaint old ballpark. The family has spent nearly \$1 billion to renovate Wrigley Field, build an outdoor entertainment plaza and a hotel, and install a sportsbook. Tom oversaw the launch of Marquee Sports Network and, most recently, poached manager Craig Counsell from the Brewers, more than doubling his salary and sending World Series hero David Ross on the first Red Line train out of town. The message: Respectable isn't good enough.



12

Penny Pritzker FORMER SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

As J.B.'s big sister, Penny is the matriarch of the family that is Illinois's equivalent to the Kennedys. Four years as commerce secretary under Barack Obama did not end her involvement with the federal government: President Biden appointed her special representative for Ukraine's economic recovery, tasking her with increasing public and private investment in the embattled nation. Pritzker also remains active on the local philanthropic scene. Her Pritzker Traubert Foundation, which she runs with her husband, Bryan Traubert, gave \$10 million to help build Sankofa Wellness Village, a walkable neighborhood in West Garfield Park.



13 Emanuel "Chris" Welch ILLINOIS HOUSE SPEAKER

Welch, the first Black speaker of the Illinois House, succeeded Michael Madigan, the longest-serving legislative leader in American history. In some ways, he has already outperformed his predecessor, as with the congressional remap that produced a 14–3 Democratic majority (and earned an F from the Princeton Gerrymandering Project) and with a record 78-member supermajority (whose competing moderate and progressive wings can be harder to manage than a narrow majority). He even stood up to J.B. Pritzker. The governor asked for \$1.1 billion in health coverage for undocumented residents. Welch gave him half.



16 Emma Tai ACTIVIST AND ORGANIZER

Paul Vallas's supporters may have written big checks, but United Working Families volunteers knocked on doors past dusk for its mayoral candidate, Brandon Johnson. His upset victory, which marked the transition of Chicago politics from a ward machine model to one based on community organizing, was a triumph for Tai, who served as UWF's executive director. Her next mission? Passing March's Bring Chicago Home ballot initiative, one of the most important items on Johnson's agenda. Tai, 39, tells *Chicago* she was recruited as campaign director by "a number of folks close to that effort in labor, community, and on the mayor's team. Several people told me I was 'the only one who could do it.'"

THE POWER 50

14 Kennedy Bartley UNITED WORKING FAMILIES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bartley was an organizer for the influential political campaign group that helped get Brandon Johnson elected. Now, after taking its helm last summer, she is working to get his agenda enacted. Though not officially part of his administration, Bartley, 29, meets regularly with his chief of staff, Jason Lee, and was deeply engaged in the 2024 budget process. Even before her current post, Bartley was a force at City Hall, laying the groundwork for progressive governance. During the Lightfoot administration, she would prepare questions for City Council allies to use during hearings, and a policy zine she cocreated was full of ideas that ended up in Johnson's platform.



Valerie Jarrett OBAMA FOUNDATION CEO

Few people are closer to the Obamas than Jarrett, who spent the eight years of Barack's presidency as a senior adviser. Head of the foundation since then, Jarrett is now overseeing construction of the Obama Presidential Center, scheduled to open in 2025. The job has involved defending the center against preservationists who objected to the Jackson Park location and community organizers concerned about gentrification. (The foundation incorporated community feedback into its plans to win neighborhood support.) No one is better informed on day-to-day operations than Jarrett, which keeps her at the center of Barack's inner circle. "She speaks for Obama," says a political journalist.



18 Scott Kirby UNITED AIRLINES CEO

Recruited from American Airlines in 2016, Kirby took over as CEO in 2020. Unlike rival airlines, United chose not to reduce its fleet during the pandemic, betting that demand would return. Kirby's bet paid off, and he now plans to purchase 110 new planes from Airbus and Boeing, allowing United to replace its aging fleet and shuttle more passengers with larger planes. Not shy about using his sway, he has publicly pressured Boeing to fix problems with its Max 9 jets, threatening to pull his order. United employs 5,000 at its Willis Tower headquarters, but a recent 113-acre land acquisition has sparked rumors that it might move them to Denver. O'Hare's No. 1 carrier says it remains committed to Chicago, but Kirby is almost certainly angling for a better deal here.



Bob Reiter CHICAGO FEDERATION OF LABOR PRESIDENT

It's no accident that when Jill Biden visited Chicago last year to tout the administration's support of organized labor, Reiter was standing behind her. He heads a group that represents more than 300 local unions, many of which don't see eye to eye. Despite those differences, Reiter has racked up wins: He successfully lobbied the city to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in 2021—four years ahead of the state—and pass an ordinance requiring employers to provide lower-wage workers with predictable schedules. He also negotiated with Bally's to ensure casino workers would receive living wages, which helped sell the project to the City Council.

PHOTOGRAPHY: (PRITZKER) GETTY; (WELCH) WELCH'S OFFICE; (TAL) ALEX GARCIA; (BARTLEY) ALEXANDER GOULETAS; (JARRETT) GETTY; (KIRBY) UNITED AIRLINES; (REITER) CHICAGO FEDERATION OF LABOR

19

Mellody Hobson
ARIEL INVESTMENTS CO-CEO

Running Ariel, which manages \$15 billion, is merely Hobson's day job. Among other roles, she is chair of Starbucks (making her the first Black woman to lead the board of an S&P 500 company) and owns a stake in the Denver Broncos. She has stepped down, though, as vice chair of World Business Chicago, a move that (perhaps purposefully) raised alarms about the mayor's relationship with the business community. These days Hobson spends part of her time at the California ranch of her filmmaker husband, George Lucas, but still has star power here. "When you say Mellody Hobson's going to be at an event, everybody's like, 'Whoa,'" says one observer.



20

Kevin Warren
CHICAGO BEARS PRESIDENT AND CEO

In addition to leading one of the NFL's most storied franchises, Warren is in charge of a highly consequential decision: choosing the site for the Bears' new \$5 billion stadium, the most coveted development in the Chicago area. (After buying and demolishing the Arlington Park racetrack as a potential site, the team is now talking about building on the lakefront, south of Soldier Field.) Warren got the Bears job because of his success as the Big Ten commissioner: He enticed USC and UCLA to join, making it the first coast-to-coast conference and reshaping college sports, and negotiated a \$1.2 billion TV deal with NBC, CBS, and Fox.



21

Laura Ricketts
SPORTS TEAM OWNER
AND POLITICAL DONOR

Already a co-owner of the Cubs, Ricketts expanded her sports portfolio last year by buying a 10 percent stake in the WNBA's Chicago Sky and leading a group of female business leaders who bought the NWSL's Chicago Red Stars. The new ownership is already making waves: In January, the Red Stars re-signed star Mallory Swanson to a \$2 million contract, making her the league's highest-paid player. The token Democrat in the Ricketts family, she donated \$250,000 to the Joe Biden inaugural committee and \$1.8 million to LPAC, which she founded to support LGBTQ+ candidates.



22

Tammy Duckworth
U.S. SENATOR

The campaign to bring the 2024 Democratic National Convention to Chicago began with Duckworth. The Democratic National Committee vice chair convinced top Democrats that the city's hotel capacity and its location in the middle of the "blue wall" of Midwestern swing states made it ideal. On Capitol Hill, she has been a reliable vote for Biden's agenda while not mincing words: The former Black Hawk pilot warned that lawmakers would have "blood on their hands" if they passed a proposal to reduce training requirements for commercial airline pilots.



23



Michael Sacks
GROSVENOR CAPITAL
MANAGEMENT
CHAIRMAN AND CEO

When Rahm Emanuel was in office, Sacks was known as the "Rahm whisperer" for his influence over the mayor. Rahm is gone, but Sacks still holds sway, albeit not as much these days. Last year, Sacks, who manages a \$75 billion hedge fund, contributed \$1 million to the Get Stuff Done PAC, which supported moderate City Council candidates against the rising socialist tide. Among his winners: Lamont Robinson, Bill Conway, Marty Quinn, and Brendan Reilly. And where Sacks donates, others follow. An ally of J.B. Pritzker's, he is leading the DNC's host committee, with responsibility for making the convention profitable for the party.



24

Raja Krishnamoorthi
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Krishnamoorthi, who represents the northwest suburbs and used his former perch as chairman of a House Oversight subcommittee to investigate everything from the Washington Commanders to the baby formula shortage, has \$14.4 million in his campaign coffers—more than three times as much as any other congressional representative from Illinois, and the third-highest total in the entire Congress. "Raja is a huge player across the country," says a political consultant. In 2022, Krishnamoorthi donated \$460,000 to Democratic candidates and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, but he is said to be stockpiling his campaign cash to run for the Senate in 2026 if Dick Durbin retires.

25

Blase Cupich
ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO

Appointed by Pope Francis in 2014, then elevated to cardinal in 2016, Cupich was tasked with implementing Francis's vision of a more open, welcoming church. (The Archdiocese of Chicago serves 2.2 million Catholics in Cook and Lake Counties.) He led a reorganization that saw the early retirement of 50 staffers and added a Hispanic council. Last year, during Pride Fest, Cupich celebrated an LGBTQ+ Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Lake View, ignoring anti-gay protesters outside. That isn't to say Cupich is entirely progressive: He called Attorney General Kwame Raoul's investigation into the church's mishandling of priest sexual abuse in Illinois "misleading," drawing a sharp rebuke from Raoul.



THE POWER 50

PHOTOGRAPHY: (HOBSON, WARREN, RICKETTS, KRISHNAMOORTH, DUCKWORTH) TRIBUNE; (SACKS) RAMZI DREESSEN/CHICAGO SUN-TIMES; (CUPICH) ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

26

Jerry Reinsdorf

CHICAGO BULLS AND CHICAGO WHITE SOX OWNER

At 88, Reinsdorf is in the twilight of his career. Still, he controls two beloved civic assets, and with the White Sox's lease at Guaranteed Rate Field expiring in 2029, he has dangled the threat of relocation to another city unless Chicago gives him what he wants. In December, Reinsdorf even met with the mayor of Nashville, MLB's top market for a new team. A few weeks later, the White Sox were reportedly in serious discussions with a developer about building a ballpark in the South Loop.



27

Kwame Raoul

ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL

Raoul, who was a state senator for 14 years, hasn't shied away from hot-button issues in his role as Illinois's top law enforcement official, using his power to solidify the state's leftward lurch. In the past year, he successfully defended the state's elimination of cash bail and convinced the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to uphold Illinois's assault weapons ban. His office also initiated bills preventing electrical shutoffs during heat waves and making it easier to collect child support from independent contractors. (He's had some losses, too, like having to back down from the state's attempt to muzzle antiabortion centers.) If J.B. Pritzker decides not to run for reelection in 2026, Raoul would be an obvious successor.



28

Jeanne Gang

ARCHITECT

Gang has become as associated with Chicago architecture in the 21st century as Wright and Mies were in the 20th. When she completed her 82-story Aqua Tower, with its flowing façade, it was the tallest building ever designed by a woman—and it has inspired a flock of imitators around the world. (Look no farther than the undulating verandas of the Regalia in Miami.) She more than anyone is defining the look of contemporary Chicago, reaching even higher with the 101-story St. Regis in Lakeshore East and even farther out with the planned Y-shaped O'Hare Global Terminal. Her contributions aren't limited to the city: She designed the new wing at the American Museum of Natural History in New York.



29

Pat Dowell

3RD WARD ALDERPERSON

As an early supporter of Mayor Johnson, the five-term alderperson was rewarded with the chairmanship of the finance committee, the City Council's most powerful one. Dowell has a reputation as the best-prepared member of the council, someone who knows the details of every legal settlement the city pays out. Her influence may grow if she gains an ally on the county level: She has endorsed moderate Eileen O'Neill Burke for Cook County state's attorney over progressive Clayton Harris III, who is backed by Toni Preckwinkle. And if Jerry Reinsdorf wants a South Loop stadium to be built, he'll have to get Dowell on board—that's her ward.

30

Danny Wirtz

CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS
CHAIRMAN AND CEO

Wirtz has served as CEO of the Blackhawks since 2020 but assumed the chairman spot after his father, Rocky, died in July. That's also when he took the reins of the

rest of the family's business interests, including Breakthru Beverage, the liquor distributor that is the source of the Wirtz fortune. Wirtz has backed general manager Kyle Davidson's plan to rebuild the team, including the decision to part ways with longtime favorites Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews. That plan got a boost when the Blackhawks won the draft lottery, allowing them to draft Connor Bedard, the most coveted prospect since Sidney Crosby. After an investigation revealed the organization's mishandling of former player Kyle Beach's sexual assault allegations against a coach, Wirtz resolved to change the Hawks' internal culture, too.





[HOW I FOUND MY POWER]

LISA DUARTE

No. 42

After I graduated from law school, I ended up doing zoning law at a tiny five- or six-person law firm. I had gone over to City Hall to ask for something for a client. It was a small thing, but it meant a lot to them. When I went to the building department, the commissioner I needed to speak to wasn't there. So I was like, "Well, call me if he comes back." As I was walking through the lobby of City Hall, I ran into him. He looked at me and went, "Your boss has been calling me all day." I reached in my bag and pulled out a sheet of application numbers and said, "These are stuck in your department. If we could get these out today before 4 o'clock, I'd really appreciate it." And he was like, "Let me see what I can do."

When I got back to my office, my phone was already ringing. It was him. He said, "Tell your boss you got this done, not him."

I realized through that one instance that I had a lot more to give, and that my skill set wasn't really measured by the billable hour.

31

Joe Mansueto
MORNINGSTAR
EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN

The financial services company he founded in 1984 manages \$295 billion and is an investment bellwether: What Morningstar recommends or buys, so do others. Mansueto, whose real estate portfolio includes the Wrigley Building and the Waldorf Astoria Chicago, also owns the Chicago Fire, and his decision to move the team back to Soldier Field from Bridgeview underscored his ambition for it. The Fire haven't had much success of late, but he did earn a win at City Hall: In 2022, Mayor Lightfoot pushed through a controversial zoning change allowing the Fire to build a training center on 23 acres of Chicago Housing Authority land — after Mansueto donated \$25,000 to her reelection. "He is a guy whose power is in reserve," says a business journalist. "If he decides to use it, then he becomes a force."



32

Tim Wentworth
WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE CEO

Wentworth took over Walgreens, the largest publicly traded company in Chicago and employer of about 10,000 locally, last October, having previously helmed Evernorth, Cigna's health services business, and pharmacy benefit giant Express Scripts. He arrived at a time when the drugstore chain was losing money and struggling with whether its corporate identity was as a retailer or a health care company. Wentworth came in blazing, replacing top executives, including the chief medical officer, and instituting a round of layoffs (and the planned closure of 60 VillageMD clinics) as part of a \$1 billion cost reduction plan.



35



John Palfrey
MACARTHUR
FOUNDATION
PRESIDENT

The philanthropic foundation he leads, which has \$7 billion in assets, gave out a difference-making \$321 million in 2022 (including the celebrated "genius" grants). Beyond that, Palfrey is leading a coalition of foundations on an initiative to invest \$500 million over the next five years to support local news, no longer a viable business model in many small communities. MacArthur's program aims to bring the facts to the one-fifth of Americans who live in news deserts. "Reliable, high-quality news," Palfrey has said, "is an essential building block of our democracy."



33

Jesús "Chuy" García
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

Though he started last year's mayoral race as the front-runner, García didn't even make the runoff, finishing a disappointing fourth. ("His personality isn't as big as he thinks it is," says one political reporter.) But he's still the boss of the Southwest Side. He dismantled the political machine of his nemesis, Ed Burke, and replaced it with a machine of his own. State representative Aarón Ortiz, county commissioner Alma Anaya, and Alderperson Jeylú Gutiérrez — Burke's successor — all owe their offices to García. His support is a big deal among Latino Chicagoans: He endorsed Delia Ramirez in her successful 2022 run for Congress.

34

John Rogers Jr.
ARIEL INVESTMENTS CO-CEO

A Hyde Parker and old basketball buddy of Barack Obama's (he captained the Princeton team), Rogers founded Ariel, the country's first Black-owned mutual fund firm, in 1983. He's also vice chair of the University of Chicago's board of trustees. "John's a perennial," says a business insider. "He's always had a presence." Beyond his strong track record as a value investor, Rogers has been at the forefront of the push to diversify boardrooms, arguing that diverse companies aren't just better for society — they're better for business.



36



Tony Petitti
BIG TEN COMMISSIONER

Petitti took over the conference last May and immediately picked up where Kevin Warren left off, adding Oregon and Washington to its nascent West Coast presence — and making the Big Ten bigger than ever. His first power test came after he suspended the conference's highest-profile coach, Jim Harbaugh, for Michigan's sign-stealing scandal. (He stood his ground even after the school threatened legal action, but Harbaugh got the last laugh by winning the Big Ten and national titles.) A former executive at ABC, CBS, and NBC, Petitti completed the \$1.2 billion deal begun by Warren that will put 45 of the new-look conference's football games on broadcast TV every season.



37

Alexi Giannoulias
ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

Giannoulias is ambitious — observers say he ran for secretary of state in 2022 to lay the groundwork for another U.S. Senate run. Since winning office, he has waded into the culture wars, positioning himself as a champion of progressive causes. At Giannoulias's urging, Illinois became the first state in the nation to prohibit book banning; he raised his profile by testifying before the U.S. Senate on the law. And responding to crackdowns by red states, he backed new legislation limiting access to license plate reader data in an attempt to protect women traveling to Illinois for abortions.

38– 39

**Morgan Elise Johnson
and Tiffany Walden**
THE TRIIBE COFOUNDERS

The Northwestern alums and sorority sisters started the Triibe website in 2017 with the goal of “reshaping the narrative of Black Chicago.” The result has been a sort of *Chicago Defender* for the digital age. “They reach the Black Chicago populace,” says one observer. “Everybody follows what they’re reporting.” But the Triibe is just as influential for its unapologetic point of view. Its favorable coverage of Brandon Johnson helped spur the youth vote that put him over the top in the mayoral election. The two mid-30s founders (Johnson serves as publisher, Walden as editor in chief) aren’t afraid to thumb their noses at mainstream power brokers and media either. During WGN’s election night coverage, Johnson clashed with other pundits, challenging conventions about crime in the city. “One thing I wanted to make sure to communicate to WGN-TV’s audience was that a youth-led movement has risen into political power,” Johnson later wrote. Meanwhile, Walden is busy spreading her influence beyond Chicago. She’s on a John S. Knight Journalism Fellowship at Stanford University, where she wants to create a blueprint for other Black journalists to duplicate what the Triibe has done.



40

**Susana
Mendoza**
ILLINOIS COMPTROLLER



She was elected in 2016, when Bruce Rauner was governor, and spent years paying off the backlog of bills caused by his budget stalemate, cutting those IOUs from \$17 billion to under \$3 billion. “She turned the comptroller’s office into something legitimate,” says a Springfield observer. “She inherited a fiscal mess and worked to stabilize the department.” Despite losing a race for mayor in 2019, and despite her ties to Ed Burke, Mendoza won more than 2.3 million votes in her 2022 reelection, the most of any statewide candidate. No one wants to be comptroller forever: Mendoza could run for governor if J. B. Pritzker moves on.

41

**Dan “Big
Cat” Katz**
BARSTOOL SPORTS
PERSONALITY

Katz, 39, hosts Barstool’s three-times-a-week *Pardon My Take* podcast, which averages 1.5 million listeners, making him one of the most popular and influential sports media personalities in the country. He can get almost any athlete to come on the show—and celebrities, too. (Recent interviewees include Rob Gronkowski and Arnold Schwarzenegger.) The show’s atmosphere is jokey and relaxed—though that can get guests in trouble, like when Charissa Thompson of Fox Sports admitted she made up sideline reports during games. Big Cat, a diehard Bears fan, moved here from New York last year, bringing dozens of other employees with him, after Barstool opened an office in Fulton Market.



42

Lisa Duarte
LOBBYIST



A well-connected lawyer and lobbyist at Croke Fairchild Duarte & Beres—“she just knows everything going on in government,” says a Springfield observer—Duarte was named in 2022 to the board of Latino Victory, a national organization focused on building progressive Latino political power across the country. (Among the group’s 2022 endorsees: Catherine Cortez Masto, whose narrow win in Nevada helped Democrats keep the U.S. Senate.) Duarte gained her political chops as legislative counsel to former mayor Rahm Emanuel and assistant deputy governor to J.B. Pritzker. Now the largest minority group in Chicago and Illinois, Latinos are fighting for more representation on the City Council and in the state legislature—and Duarte will play a key role.

43

Pat Ryan
BUSINESSMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST

There’s a reason both Northwestern’s football stadium and its basketball arena carry the name of this insurance billionaire. Over the years, the founder of Aon Corporation and his wife have given \$700 million to their alma mater, where he is chairman of the board of trustees. Their latest gift, \$480 million, was earmarked for various research initiatives and the controversial plan to renovate the football stadium. Ryan’s influence goes beyond his beloved Wildcats. He’s also a minority owner of the Bears and has donated big bucks to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, a rehabilitation research hospital on Northwestern’s Streeterville campus.



44

Shams Charania
NBA REPORTER



Information is power. And when it comes to the NBA, few people know more about what’s happening than Charania, a reporter for the *New York Times*–owned website the Athletic and a panelist on *Run It Back*, FanDuel’s weekday NBA show. The New Trier and Loyola University grad, 29, is one of the two most connected NBA reporters, along with ESPN’s Adrian Wojnarowski. He’s on the phone 18 hours a day chatting with agents, GMs, and players. He’s so clued in that Warriors coach Steve Kerr even accused him of having a mole in the locker room.

SHAMS CHARANIA

No. 44

In the summer of 2017, when I was 23, I was thrust into a position leading NBA coverage for Yahoo Sports as the main insider there. It put me in a situation and a spotlight that I didn't know I was ready for. In the back of your mind, you always have this level of doubt. You've put in all this work and built these relationships. But will it pan out?

I felt the same way when I was covering games while I was in high school and college. I'm driving home from Milwaukee at like 3 or 4 in the morning, and I don't know if what I'm doing is the right path. I'm just doing it out of sheer passion and will. You don't leave that moment of self-doubt, but you just keep pushing through that and keep grinding.

That summer of 2017, I felt like I was at the forefront of a lot of reporting. I definitely got a lot of replies on social media. I saw a lot of memes. I had to turn a lot of it off, because it got overwhelming. That summer was big.



45



Theaster Gates

ARTIST

The internationally renowned installation artist rose to fame as a neighborhood builder, bringing culture to neglected corners of Chicago. He had his first major American museum survey at New York City's New Museum in 2022, and his installation *A Monument to Listening* was unveiled last year in Memphis. His Stony Island Arts Bank, in Grand Crossing, contains the archives of *Jet* and *Ebony* magazines and the vinyl collection of house music pioneer Frankie Knuckles. His most recent project in the neighborhood is Kenwood Gardens, where he hopes to attract sculptures from around the world. Where Gates has the most impact, though, is in lifting up other Black artists. He collaborated with Prada to conceive a three-year incubator program for creatives of color.

46

Jianan Shi

CHICAGO BOARD OF
EDUCATION PRESIDENT



A former teacher who served as executive director of Raise Your Hand for Illinois Public Education, a parent empowerment organization, Shi is now the progressive movement's man on the Chicago Public Schools board—and he's in a position to radically reshape the district. Appointed by Mayor Johnson in July, Shi—at 33, the youngest person to serve as board president—rolled out the controversial plan to move away from school choice (namely, selective enrollment schools) in favor of strengthening neighborhood schools. Shi has stood firm despite the backlash, calling the resolution “a new chapter” to address “long-standing structural racism and socioeconomic inequality.”

48



Richard Gonzalez

ABBVIE CEO

Gonzalez has helmed the biopharmaceutical firm since it was spun off from Abbott Laboratories in 2013, tripling its annual revenues to more than \$50 billion, largely on the back of the blockbuster arthritis drug Humira. He now oversees 50,000 employees worldwide from the North Chicago headquarters. At 70, Gonzalez has hinted at retiring, but not until he leaves the company on solid footing. Late last year, he greenlighted two significant acquisitions in a bid to make up expected revenue loss from the expiration of the Humira patent: Cerevel Therapeutics, which specializes in drugs for schizophrenia and Alzheimer's (Gonzalez reportedly personally handled most of the negotiation), and ImmunoGen, maker of an ovarian cancer medication.



47

Erick Williams

VIRTUE HOSPITALITY
GROUP OWNER

Winner of the James Beard Award for best chef in the Great Lakes region and named by *Nation's Restaurant News* as its innovator of the year in 2023, Williams has quickly become one of the city's most respected chefs and perhaps the public face of its food scene. Operating four popular South Side restaurants (Virtue, Daisy's Po-Boy and Tavern, Mustard Seed Kitchen, and Top This Mac N' Cheese), with another celebrating Mexican culture in the works, Williams is celebrated not just for bringing exceptional Southern cooking to town but for mentoring young Black culinary talent, notably Damarr Brown, his chef de cuisine at Virtue.



49

Curt Bailey

RELATED MIDWEST PRESIDENT

There are plenty of bigtime developers in Chicago, but only one controls a 62-acre tract that can hold an MLB stadium. Bailey, who is also developing the former Spire site, managed to get approval in 2019 to develop the South Loop property, which he's calling the 78, a significant achievement that had eluded other developers. Now he's in talks with Jerry Reinsdorf and Mayor Johnson about building a new White Sox stadium there—a potential game-changer for the franchise and the entire Near South Side. Baseball stadium or not, there's little doubt that Bailey is sitting on a diamond.



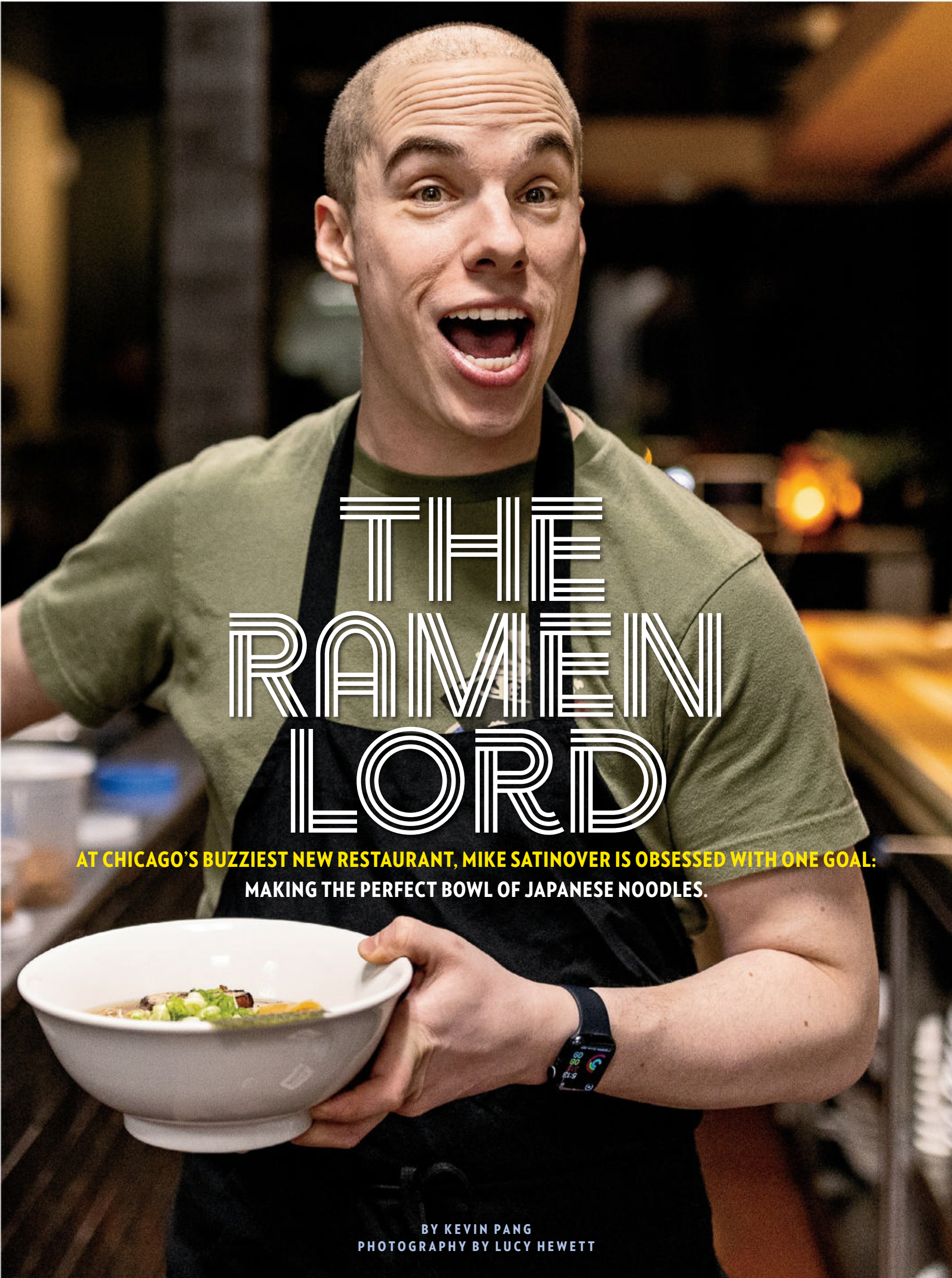
50

Cole Bennett

LYRICAL LEMONADE FOUNDER

The music video guru, 27, started Lyrical Lemonade as a blog when he was a student at suburban Plano High School. He's since built it into a multimedia conglomerate with 22 million YouTube subscribers and its own music festival, Summer Smash. A Bennett video can massively boost a rapper's reach. Exhibit A: Juice WRLD's 2018 “Lucid Dreams” video, which has 957 million views. Now Bennett is so big that established stars—think Justin Bieber—want to work with him. His star-studded debut studio album, released in January, united Lil Durk and Kid Cudi on a track for the first time.



A man with a surprised expression, wide eyes, and an open mouth, holding a white bowl of ramen. He is wearing a green t-shirt and a black apron. The background is a blurred restaurant kitchen.

THE RAMEN LORD

**AT CHICAGO'S BUZZIEST NEW RESTAURANT, MIKE SATINOVER IS OBSESSED WITH ONE GOAL:
MAKING THE PERFECT BOWL OF JAPANESE NOODLES.**

BY KEVIN PANG
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUCY HEWETT

FOR A GUY WHO CHUGGED A GHOST ENERGY DRINK FOR BREAKFAST, MIKE SATINOVER HAS REMARKABLY STEADY HANDS.

They don't jitter when he places a level, the kind you'd buy at Home Depot, on top of two logs of rolled-up dough sheets, resembling industrial spools of paper towels.

Rolling out ramen dough is exacting work. And Satinover won't trust anyone else at his restaurant to do it – not until he can train someone properly, and that might take months. So with hands as still as a watchmaker's despite three espresso shots' worth of caffeine in his bloodstream, he adjusts the rolls of dough until the level's bubble floats precisely between the center lines.

This ensures an even thickness when the machine he feeds the dough into pushes out what will become 300 servings of ramen noodles. Unfurled end to end, the sheets of dough he'll make today would stretch 116 yards – longer than a football field.

Satinover, 35, sports peach-fuzz hair and a black Pippin's Tavern hoodie that's dusted with flour. As the noodle-making machine whirs and slowly coils, he takes out a pocket humidity gauge. The air inside his Logan Square restaurant, Akahoshi Ramen, measures 17 percent this winter morning, too dry for his ramen to remain as pliable as he'd like – 30 to 40 percent humidity is ideal. Already he's had to repair some broken patches. Maybe he'll buy a humidifier, yet one more unexpected expense.

Mostly, the man is exhausted. Energy drinks don't get Satinover wired anymore, only lift him to a state of not-collapsing. But this is what he signed up for when

he left his lucrative marketing job to toil from dusk till dawn in pursuit of serving a perfect bowl of ramen.

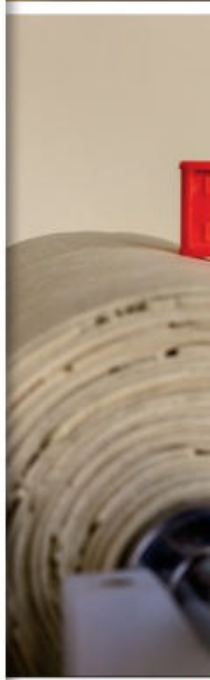
"I'm not getting good sleep. It's pretty brutal," says Satinover, whose restaurant has been packed since he opened it in late November. "I'm worried the mental and physical exhaustion will get to me."

He continues feeding dough into the complicated and frightening Yamato Richmen noodle-making machine. It's all buttons, rollers, and dials – 595 pounds of shine and chrome that could mangle appendages if you're standing too close and not paying attention. At \$40,000, it costs as much as a 2024 BMW 2 Series (shipping alone, from Japan, was \$5,000), and for over a year it took up space in Satinover's West Loop apartment, even before he signed the lease for the restaurant space.

His devotion to precision is astounding to behold, exasperating to capture in words: Three hundred servings of noodles (at 135 grams each) requires 30 kilograms of flour. But not just any flour. Over the years, Satinover has dialed in on the two types and the ratio he needs to hit the sweet spot of noodle firmness, a 13.2 percent protein level: 19,500 grams of King Arthur Sir Lancelot (14.2 percent protein) and 10,500 grams of King Arthur Sir Galahad (11.7 percent). Then, to give the noodles the toothsome chew and pale yellow hue he desires, he adds exactly 10,500 grams of water containing 330 grams of sodium bicarbonate, 150 grams of potassium carbonate, and three-eighths of a teaspoon of riboflavin.



Satinover watches sheets of dough roll out of the Yamato Richmen noodle machine, looking for any tears or other imperfections.





STRIVING FOR A PERFECT BOWL OF RAMEN REQUIRES MORE THAN FEEL, INTUITION, AND THOUSANDS OF HOURS OF MUSCLE MEMORY. **IT DEMANDS EXACTITUDE USING LEVELS, HUMIDITY GAUGES, AND REFRACTOMETERS.**



Even with a noodle-making machine as high-tech as Satinover's, he can't just set it and forget it. The noodles need to be pressed again and again. Ramen noodles are denser than, say, macaroni – if kept in broth overnight, good ramen noodles shouldn't bloat. The dough enters the machine between two rollers, set at 1.5 millimeter thickness. Once it emerges, it's folded by Satinover, then pressed again at specific intervals five more times before it's cut into those familiar long strands. And that's just the noodles for his miso ramen; for his soupless ramen, he uses a thicker noodle with an entirely different, but also painstakingly derived, formulation.

This noodle-making process eats up five hours of Satinover's day, and it doesn't include the 48 hours required for the noodles to sit in a sealed proofing box, commonly used for pizza dough, to age and develop flavor. All this should yield enough noodles to meet the demand for two nights of

dinner service. But the way business is going at Akahoshi Ramen, the buzz surrounding it growing by the day, the reality is closer to a night and a half.

Striving for a perfect bowl of ramen – even if it can't practically be achieved – requires more than feel, intuition, and thousands of hours of muscle mem-

At Akahoshi Ramen, where the lines form outside before the restaurant even opens, Satinover spends 14-hour days checking the thickness of his dough, clumping fresh-cut noodles into serving sizes, keeping an eye on the preparation of his ramen, and holding court with guests.



ory. It demands exactitude measured in decimals, seconds, and milligrams, using levels, humidity gauges, and

refractometers. It is cooking that veers into the domain of laboratory science.

Ask Satinover why this kind of precision is necessary – or really any question at all – and you'll get an answer that is thought out, quantitative, ready to be bullet-pointed: "There are two reasons. From a business perspective, it's consistency. My intuition about what's right isn't applicable to every component of every dish. I need a control, and numbers are easy to control. The other reason is to avoid having to think about it, to avoid the mental load of what's correct and what's not. The number is correct. Twenty grams of onions is correct, not 10 onions. What if you have a larger onion? It's for a reduction in mental exhaustion."

Satinover is a chef obsessed and possessed. But he doesn't have the contemplative intensity of a Grant Achatz or Curtis Duffy – he is more in the mold of a chill gamer and sneakerhead, his cooking philosophy formed on Reddit, not at the Culinary Institute of America. His singular infatuation with ramen has served him well. For more than a decade, Satinover achieved esteemed status on Ramen Internet, which led him to roll out a series of pop-ups around the country and now to open what is Chicago's most buzzed-about restaurant in years.



ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE in America, even the redemption of a punch line. As recently as 20 years ago, outside of Little Tokyos and suburban strip malls catering to the Japanese, the idea of ramen as an American dining genre



SATINOVER WAS HOOKED AFTER HIS FIRST BOWL “MY BRAIN COULDN’T COMPREHEND WHAT THIS I DIDN’T UNDERSTAND THAT YOU

was a fanciful notion. Ramen was the staple of hungry and destitute college students. Ramen was chicken-flavored noodle soup from Maruchan, a dozen packets collecting dust in a food donation bin. Ramen in America was an avatar for cheapness and convenience, until it wasn’t. And now? People travel across multiple state lines just to sample a bowl of Japanese noodle broth because someone on Reddit said it was worth the trip. What a country.

The online forum r/ramen is one of the friendlier corners of Reddit. The majority of posts by its 787,000-plus members feature photographs of homemade ramen attempted by amateur cooks. The photos are beautifully composed, the presentation of the ramen an art form in itself.

The more meticulous artisan will execute the “noodle fold,” which involves draping noodles over chopsticks, then carefully folding them once, all together, onto themselves, the individual strands aligned, resembling a three-dimensional barcode. Some bowls have ajitama – a soft-boiled egg marinated in soy sauce – that’s been bisected lengthwise, showcasing its oozy, lustrous yolk in all its sunflower-yellow glory. Amateur cooks are known to use an eyedropper to place precisely random beads of aroma oil – a fat such as butter or lard flavored with aromatics – on the soup’s surface in service of a gorgeous photo.

By and large, r/ramen feels like an encouraging place, with the genial vibe of a student art exhibition. Once the finished bowls are posted, there’ll be upvotes from fellow members, with comments like “Looks amazing” or “Great job!”

Spend any length of time on r/ramen and you’ll notice one user getting name-checked a lot: Ramen_Lord, often spoken of in language befitting actual deities (“Praise be to Ramen_Lord” and “All hail Ramen_Lord,” sayeth two recent posts). Since 2013, Ramen_Lord has earned his reputation by rigorously sharing every data point of his research on making ramen at home, hundreds of thousands of words now. If you’ve posted a photo of a homemade bowl on r/ramen, there’s a decent chance the recipe was developed by Ramen_Lord. At Satinover’s previous job, at the marketing research firm Kantar, a colleague learned Satinover was into ramen and suggested he check out the writings of the Reddit user Ramen_Lord.

What the co-worker didn’t know: Satinover is Ramen_Lord, a secret he kept from all but his family for nearly four years. Like many usernames, the self-glorifying moniker was intended as a joke. Satinover never imagined that one day he would, in fact, be viewed as a ramen lord.

It wasn’t until the food website Serious Eats interviewed the man behind Ramen_Lord in 2017 that Satinover outed himself. There was nary a word about Satinover not being of Japanese ancestry, this gaijin who dared to call himself Ramen_Lord. By this point in the rise of ramen in America,

the well-known names making it weren’t even Japanese: David Chang of the Momofuku Noodle Bar empire is a Korean American. Ivan Orkin is a New York native who ran beloved shops in Tokyo and New York and cowrote a bestselling English-language ramen cookbook.

Reddit users saw Satinover as someone who put in the work, who earned his stripes by being rigorous with his research. From the start, Satinover’s posts were treatises reminiscent of the recipe deep dives that propelled food writer J. Kenji López-Alt into culinary celebritydom. At a time when cooking content is condensed ever shorter, and more aspirational than useful, everything about Satinover’s instructions is slow and precise: Pork belly chashu should be cooked sous vide in a water bath at exactly 154 degrees Fahrenheit. For ajitama, the amount of soy sauce and mirin needed is 10 and 8 percent, respectively, of the combined weight of the peeled eggs and the water, which should be weighed separately.

There’s a culture of secrecy around ramen recipes in Japan, especially among shop owners in a fiercely competitive market. But Satinover wasn’t yet a restaurateur, just a hobbyist. Over the years, he would post a dozen recipes that he developed – from chicken paitan and tonkotsu gyokai tsukemen to a new wave Tokyo-style soy sauce – and these arrived on Reddit with the impact of a surprise Beyoncé album drop.

“I decided I’m just going to have no secrets, no matter what happens. I have to be an absolutist in that approach,” Satinover says. “The more I delved in, the more I realized they weren’t really my secrets to have. I’m not even Japanese. As an outsider, it felt very bizarre to think, Well, I have amassed this knowledge; let me just hoard it for myself. Why not share it? These things deserve to be known by everybody.”

Satinover’s most popular post was his most ambitious. In 2020, he and his twin brother, Scott Satinover, posted a free 137-page e-book called *The Ramen_Lord Book of Ramen*. There’s no fancy layout and only a handful of pictures – it’s just Satinover’s ramen brain downlinked to 47,351 words in a single-spaced Google doc. (A doctoral student in engineering, Scott helped write, edit, and explain the science.) Whatever poisonous reputation Reddit has sometimes earned, this was the very opposite: a community of like-minded folks celebrating something nice, flipping out in all-caps exaltations that its Lord had collected his wisdom into a bible.

A frequent question from Reddit users: When might they ever get to taste Satinover’s ramen in person. One-off pop-up dinners? Sure. But in that Serious Eats unmasking, Satinover was asked whether he’d consider opening his own restaurant. He replied: “I’m not sure I’m cut out for it. Loving a dish and loving making a dish are only part of the equation for owning a restaurant, and I have an immense respect for those who pursue that career, but it might not be my strong suit.”

AT A LEGENDARY MISO RAMEN SHOP IN SAPPORO, JAPAN. REALLY WAS IN TERMS OF COMPOSITION. COULD MAKE FOOD TASTE LIKE THIS.”

MIKE

SATINOVER'S UPBRINGING wasn't dissimilar to that of other kids in 1990s Oak Park: He played a lot of video games, tried tennis and gymnastics, generally earned excellent grades. For a while, he was deep into spoken-word poetry, and his parents

remember him obsessing over every word on his laptop to find the perfect imagery. "Mike has a goal in mind and then he pursues it with passion and vigor," says his father, Ira Satinover, a retired oral surgeon. His mother, Luisa DiPietro, is a professor at the University of Illinois Chicago's College of Dentistry.

Their son would spend long stretches of his days immersed in role-playing video games like *Final Fantasy*, the type of attention-span-testing contests where, Mike Satinover says, "you just have to grind to beat it – no shortcuts." Later, in college, he would go through a phase of making macarons, the notoriously finicky Parisian confection. Over several years, he baked 38 batches, a few dozen cookies each time, documenting every attempt with detailed recipe notes.

In high school, Satinover had aspirations of becoming a chef. It was the alchemy and instant gratification, the possibility that, when it came to ingredients, one plus one plus one could equal five. When he was old enough to drive, he worked 20 hours a week as an unpaid stagiaire at an Italian restaurant in Forest Park. This was about the time Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential* became a pop culture sensation, and the restaurant industry's seedy side was still being glorified as rock 'n' roll. Satinover enjoyed the quieter parts – picking herbs and piping goat cheese into squash blossoms – but the head chef treated him like scum. "He called me all sorts of crazy names," Satinover says. "He never taught me anything. It was all very unpleasant." After a solid year of full-frontal shit eating, he couldn't stomach the idea of entering culinary school, much less spending his life working in a restaurant.

His decision in high school to study Japanese (which interested him more than French or Spanish – that, and he was a

fan of *Dragon Ball Z*) opened up new options. His junior year, he took a two-week trip to Nagano, Tokyo, and Kyoto, spending part of the time with a host family. An Italian Jewish gaming-obsessed geek who knew only upper-middle-class Oak Park, Satinover had his world rocked by Japan. Beyond the modernity and cleanliness, it was the cultural minutiae – like waking up to the smell of a rice cooker instead of an alarm clock – that most intrigued the impressionable 17-year-old. On a more abstract level, the collectivist culture of the Japanese, which stood in contrast to American individualism, was strange and strangely compelling to him.

When the time came for college applications, Satinover sought out schools with strong Japanese language departments.

That's how he ended up at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He spent his junior year at Hokkaido University. It was there, in Sapporo, Japan, on a frigid November night in 2009, that one perfect bowl of miso ramen would sling-shot Satinover's life into a whole new trajectory.



Satinover's signature bowl: Sapporo-style miso ramen

SAPPORO HAS something in common with Chicago: It, too, is a northern city that endures bitter winters. The warming properties of ramen make the dish a popular elixir, and Sapporo boasts more than a thousand ramen

shops in a city of two million people. The defining feature of Sapporo ramen (there are upward of 40 recognized ramen variants across Japan) is a broth cooked with miso, a fermented soybean paste. Unlike cleaner, lighter broths such as shoyu (soy sauce) or shio (sea salt), miso ramen is viscous and often creamy, its pungent, earthy savoriness particularly soul satisfying in cold-weather climates.

Sapporo-style miso is one of the few types of ramen requiring a wok. At searingly high temperatures, woks provide the requisite char (Chinese originators called it "wok hei") that gives food an appealing, slightly burnt tinge. In Sapporo-style ramen, bean sprouts (or cabbage) with a thick dollop of miso paste first get this charring, the flames from the gas burners licking high and caramelizing the sugars.

Pork broth is then ladled into this stir-fry, and within seconds everything comes to a vigorous boil.

What happens next necessitates nimble hands and tight choreography. As soon as the curly yellow noodles come out of the cooking water, they are shaken dry to remove excess moisture (overcook them by even 10 seconds and they'll lose that springy chew). When they land in the serving bowl, the wok broth with bean sprouts is poured over top. Toppings – pork belly chashu, strips of bamboo shoots called menma, scallions, sometimes corn and butter – are nestled into the noodles. Then the finished bowl is quickly dispatched to the diner. Assuming every component is properly prepped, a bowl of miso ramen should take less than four minutes from cook to serve.

Satinover knew none of this when a fellow student recommended he visit Sumire, a legendary miso ramen shop in Sapporo. The only ramen he'd had theretofore was of the instant packet variety, plus a few bowls from the food court at Mitsuwa Marketplace in Arlington Heights. He wasn't yet a superfan, but the dish sounded more exciting than the broiled fish and steamed rice served at the dorm canteen.

When the ramen bowl arrived at his counter seat, it was nothing pretty: yellow noodles submerged in murky beige with a tangle of light green scallions. On the surface of the soup was what looked like a quarter-inch layer of liquefied pork lard. This insulated a scalding hot broth, McDonald's-coffee-lawsuit hot, a temperature many degrees higher than what American restaurants would serve.

Here's the part of the biopic where Paul McCartney sees the guitar in the music store window or Dorothy enters the Technicolor world of Oz: The first sip burned his mouth.

Ask Satinover to describe how the ramen tasted, and he'll respond by telling you how it made him feel: incredulous. "My brain couldn't comprehend what this really was in terms of composition. I didn't understand that you could make food taste like this," he says. "There was something immensely pleasurable about it in a core, visceral way. Nothing was wrong. Everything was correct."

If ever a bowl of noodles could kick your ass, Sumire's miso ramen did it to Satinover with steel-tipped boots. For the first time since arriving in Japan, he was tasting food in the outer bounds: intense savoriness, extreme richness, wobbly fat from the chashu, bean sprouts charred dark. As he sat alone at this second-floor walkup in Sapporo, his life changed, even if he didn't know it at the time. But the problem with losing his ramen-in-Japan virginity to something so maximally delicious was that it set Satinover up for a high nearly impossible to replicate, like having Gisele Bündchen as your first girlfriend.

Satinover's ramen bell couldn't be unrung. Every free moment in the coming months was spent at a ramen shop, slurping, chasing that dragon. So obsessed was he that he proposed doing an independent study at school, documenting and

reviewing ramen shops in Sapporo. (Basically, a food blog.) There would be lengthy write-ups of restaurants, photos, interviews with chefs, Google Maps listings. In his introductory post to the Sapporo Ramen Guide, still online today, Satinover wrote (grammar cleaned up slightly):

So, using my decent-at-best Japanese, I will be compiling some of the best, and some of the worst, shops there are, written for your pleasure and use. I will do the research, I will conduct the interviews, I will ask the questions, then show you the results, so you don't have to.

Two months and 21 posts later, his teacher scored his project 98 out of 100.

When Satinover returned to the University of Wisconsin to complete his degree (in addition to Japanese, he also majored in international business and marketing), he began feeling an

"I'VE PRIORITIZED THIS RESTAURANT OVER EVERYTHING ELSE IN MY LIFE. I HAVE NO OTHER HOBBIES, NOTHING ELSE IS DRIVING ME. IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN FRIENDS, MY OWN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING. AND I'M KIND OF OK WITH THAT."

intense yearning. The one place in town serving ramen might have been fine for Madison, but it was inadequate for someone who had visited nearly a hundred ramen restaurants during his year abroad. He describes what he felt as "deep reverse culture shock": "I was like an addict. I went from eating this thing all the time to not having it at all. I missed the memory of it. I had a lifestyle, and that lifestyle was immediately stripped from me in an intense, difficult way."

LET'S PAUSE TO LOOK BACK AT CHICAGO'S FLEDGLING ramen scene, circa the early 2010s. It's not like ramen wasn't around then, but the offerings here were of the mom-and-pop variety, with no online footprint, no publicists – the types of places Eater wouldn't hyperventilate over. There was one spot where local ramen geeks got their fix: Santouka, the noodle chain with an outpost in Mitsuwa's food court. But Arlington Heights was so far away that city dwellers had to pay the Illinois Tollway each time they wanted a bowl.

If there was one chef who helped ramen achieve "city cool" in Chicago, it was Bill Kim, who spent time under Charlie Trotter. Kim's restaurant Urbanbelly, which opened in 2008, had a few things that lent it street cred: It was next to a laundromat in a sad Avondale strip mall, its interior design oozed hipness, and its seating was communal benches, which, apart from Avec, was still a novel concept here at the time.

Kim, a Korean American, served an array of pan-Asian dishes, including lamb and brandy dumplings and a killer

(Continued on page 93)





Fashion

Gets

THE TWISTS

Women's shorts in the style of men's boxers, an '80s revival cheetah-print sweater, a letterman jacket embellished with crystals and pearls — it's springtime for lighthearted quirkiness.

Fun

DESIGNERS HAVE GONE PLAYFUL THIS SEASON. THESE PIECES, PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE OLD POST OFFICE IN THE WEST LOOP, FEATURE CLEVER TWISTS GUARANTEED TO DELIVER.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADAM OUAHMANE
STYLING BY JESSICA MOAZAMI

→ *Opposite page:* Chanel glittered tweed jacket, \$9,300, silk organza blouse, \$4,550, cotton shorts, \$1,550, and metal and resin earrings, \$650, Chanel, 65 E. Oak St. → *This page, on left:* Isabel Marant mohair sweater, \$650, and Jil Sander polyester pants, \$840, Nordstrom, 55 E. Grand Ave. Marni cotton shirt, \$935, Ikram, 15 E. Huron St. Louis Vuitton Speedy 40 Bandoulière Damier Pop bag, \$3,400, Louis Vuitton, 919 N. Michigan Ave. Jimmy Choo loafers, \$850, Jimmy Choo, 114 E. Oak St. *On right:* Louis Vuitton wool and leather varsity blouson, \$7,200, cotton shirt, \$1,640, LV Dandy leather loafers, \$1,170, and cotton socks, \$565, Louis Vuitton.

→ Hermès leather jacket, \$16,300, and short-sleeved ribbed cashmere sweater, \$3,375, Hermès, 25 E. Oak St. → *Opposite page:* Chanel lambskin purse, \$9,200, Chanel. Gucci crystal-embellished silk, cashmere, and mohair cropped polo sweater, \$1,650, and Moschino cotton shorts, \$555, Ikram. Exquisite J elastic belt with enameled buckle, \$310, and Nest Jewelry 24-karat gold-plated brass and silver-tone bangles, \$150 each, Neiman Marcus, 737 N. Michigan Ave. Fendi Roma stamped croc leather pumps, \$930, fendi.com.





THE TWIST An accessory becomes the star with this whimsical take on a handbag, made to look like a camera. (Under the “lens” cap is a compact mirror.)

← **THE TWIST** This off-kilter jacket boasts supersize pockets set at an angle.



THE TWIST A timeless menswear combination is rejuvenated with an oversize sweater and creeper shoes evoking '80s punk.

→ **THE TWIST** A sleeveless leather turtleneck bodysuit gets the '90s treatment with padded shoulders.



→ *Opposite page:* Jil Sander oversized wool cardigan, \$1,080, and lightweight wool cropped trousers, \$950, Nordstrom. Loewe pinstriped cotton shirt, \$1,150, Ikram. Jimmy Choo Marlow loafers, \$850, Jimmy Choo.
→ *This page:* Sportmax leather sleeveless turtleneck bodysuit, \$425, Max Mara, 900 N. Michigan Ave. Chloé Italian leather A-line belted skirt, \$3,450, Nordstrom.

→ *Officine Générale* Kane wool double-breasted jacket, \$835, wide-legged pants, \$485, and Frame cotton T-shirt, \$98, Nordstrom. Converse x Comme des Garçons Play canvas sneakers, \$150, Bloomingdale's, 900 N. Michigan Ave. → *Opposite page:* Loewe cashmere cardigan, \$2,100, cotton shorts, \$1,600, and Campo leather mules, \$1,200, loewe.com.





THE TWIST A knitting needle that functions as a belt? Now that's sharp.

← **THE TWIST** Business, meet casual: A classically tailored double-breasted jacket is paired with wide-legged trousers.

→ Simone Rocha crystal-embellished wool sports coat, \$1,800, and wool and polyester pants, \$640, Ikram. Officine Générale cotton tuxedo shirt, \$310, Nordstrom. Dr. Martens leather platform Chelsea boots, \$210, Dr. Martens, 3452 N. Southport Ave. → *Opposite page*, on left: Hyke cotton double-shoulder tank, polyester midi skirt, and polyester and cotton corset belt, prices on request, hyke.jp. The Office of Angela Scott leather platform oxfords, \$650, theofficeofangela.com. On right: Dolce & Gabbana cotton and silk jacquard jacket, \$3,945, cropped trousers, \$1,325, and vest, \$1,195, Ikram. Jimmy Choo Ixia 95 patent leather pumps, \$895, Jimmy Choo.





THE TWIST Crisscrossed straps elevate a tank top to high fashion, and blazing yellow modernizes the traditionally uptight three-piece suit.

← **THE TWIST** Masculine, typically staid formalwear gets an enlivening makeover from jet beading.



CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

This spring, the legendary Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, led by artistic director and NEA Jazz Master Wynton Marsalis, returns in two distinct programs: a night commemorating the 125th anniversary of Duke Ellington's birth and a rousing, jazz-meets-classical event in collaboration with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

In May, immerse yourself in Steven Spielberg's sci-fi masterpiece, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, with John Williams's pioneering score performed by the CSO. Guest conductor Tania Miller joins the CSO for Sound Waves — an opportunity for kids of all ages to dive into the wonder and symbolism of water.

In June, enjoy a concert featuring iconic music from the ageless James Bond movie franchise, including hits from *Skyfall*, *Goldfinger*, *Diamonds Are Forever*, and more. John Morris Russell conducts the CSO alongside Broadway star and vocal powerhouse Capathia Jenkins. Ticket packages are available that include prime seating at the concert and a preconcert event with hors d'oeuvres stations and specialty drinks.

For information and tickets, visit [cso.org](https://www.cso.org) or call 312-294-3000 for personalized service.

SPRING HIGHLIGHTS

All programs at Symphony Center,
220 S. Michigan Ave.

CSO x Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra with Wynton Marsalis

Tuesday, April 25, at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, April 26, at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 27, at 7:30 p.m.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind in Concert

Friday, May 3, at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 5, at 3 p.m.

Sound Waves

Saturday, May 11, at 11 a.m.

Saturday, May 11, at 12:45 a.m.

Shaken, Not Stirred

Tuesday, June 4, at 7:30 p.m.

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Schubert & Beethoven
MAR 1-2

Jessie Montgomery
& Curtis Stewart
MAR 3

Gil Shaham Plays
Mendelssohn
MAR 7-12

Eliades Ochoa
MAR 8

Benjamin Grosvenor
MAR 10

Also sprach Zarathustra
MAR 14-16

Max Raabe & Palast Orchester
MAR 15

Mahler 4
MAR 21-24

Mahler Chamber Orchestra
& Mitsuko Uchida
MAR 26

The Music of Bach
MAR 28-APR 2

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FOUND

From left: Mini Roxy, \$4,000, and Posey, \$7,650, stacking engagement rings and Til Death enameled band, \$1,450

Put a Ring on It

Marrow Fine gives “I do” a stylish spin. By KELLY AIGLON

■ Jillian Sassone started reworking heirloom jewelry in her San Diego home as a hobby. Now her baubles have a sparkling new residency in the Gold Coast, the third boutique for her company, Marrow Fine, and first outside of Southern Cal. The art deco–inspired store shines in the engagement- and wedding-ring department with a range of white diamonds, colored gemstones, and even enameled bands with Gothic engraving. Can’t decide? Book a consultation over Champagne in the adjoining Babe Cave, a private salon designed to resemble a hollowed-out ruby. Even if there are no nuptials in your future, you can still get a happily-ever-after feeling shopping the pinkie and birthstone rings. 9 W. Walton St.

STORE VS. STORE

Cycle Stars

They are two of the area's oldest bike shops, third-generation family affairs. Which one pops your wheelie? By WEB BEHRENS

Specialized Diverge E5
and Giro Agilis helmet

Breaking away Some bike shops focus on certain brands. Not Kozy's. "We're big enough that we can say, 'We sell what we want,'" says Paul Kozy, grandson of the founder. That's evident at its three-floor Avondale megastore, where you can test-drive on an indoor riding area.

Kozy's

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Origin story It started as a Bridgeport general repair shop in 1944, fixing everything from bicycles to washing machines. It also sold Vespa scooters for a time before transitioning to just bicycles in the '70s.



Special sauce You can't beat the liberal fix-it policy: A bike purchase comes with two fall tune-ups, plus a year of adjustments. Says Kozy: "I can't believe no one has copied us."

Element of surprise What's with the disco ball at the River North store? It came with the premises, which used to be Walter Payton's America's Bar.



Avondale manager Luis Iniguez

VS.

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Jeff (left) and Greg Hajduk

Special sauce The Hajduks' motto is "Bikes for everyone, from 2 to 92." That means you'll find bright pintsize kids' bikes alongside old-school Schwinns.



Element of surprise How did Wrigley Field ivy end up on the outside wall? Little brother Kenny Hajduk worked on the Cubs' ground crew.



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By JESSICA MOAZAMI



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Back row, from left: Breanna Colorina, FNP-C; Katherine Shipley, FNP-BC; Kaitlyn Williams, RVT; Paul Piszczuk, RVT.
Front row, from left: Arielle Port, MD; Mensur O. Sunje, MD, MS; Danish Haque, MD.

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Dr. Peter D. Geldner The Geldner Center Plastic Surgery & Med Spa

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Dr. Geldner is past president of the Chicago Society of Plastic Surgeons and is considered one of the leading plastic surgeons in the Midwest. He is a perennial fixture on "best of" lists, both regionally and nationally. Dr. Geldner has been named a "Top Doctor" by *U.S. News and World Report*, *Castle Connolly*, the *Consumers' Research Council of America*, *RealSelf*, and *Chicago* magazine. When the media wants an expert, they talk to Dr. Geldner. He has shared his expertise on ABC, NBC, WGN, Fox Business, Fox News, the Learning Channel, Web MD Radio Live, and many other media outlets.

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Cosmetic Surgery Profiles



Dr. Jeremy Warner *Warner Aesthetic & Reconstructive Institute*

Dr. Jeremy Warner embodies professionalism and personality. He is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery and Founder of the Warner Aesthetic & Reconstructive Institute, a world-class aesthetic and reconstructive surgical practice, fellowship training center, and provider of global volunteer surgical services. Dr. Warner is nationally and world-renowned for his surgical expertise in facial plastic surgery, particularly rhinoplasty, revision rhinoplasty, and in-office facial rejuvenation. Dr. Warner provides the highest-quality surgical and nonsurgical procedures, including the in-office SWIFT LIFT™ procedure — a proprietary procedure that offers the natural results of a traditional face-lift/neck-lift with the benefits of being performed safely and completely comfortably under local anesthesia without drains, and cutting the average operating

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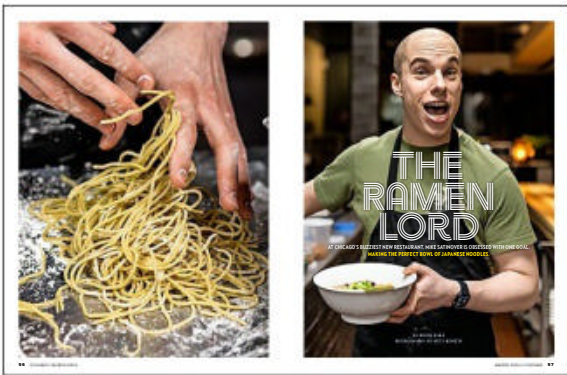
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The Ramen Lord

(Continued from page 64)

pineapple and pork belly fried rice. Urbanbelly also offered ramen, and though it didn't adhere to traditional Japanese interpretations, it was nonetheless delicious: The restaurant's flagship bowl featured pork belly and shiitake mushrooms in a broth tinged with pho spices, lime juice, and fish sauce. I suppose you could call that pho, but the noodles were ramen-style.

After Urbanbelly, Chicago's culinary scene began treating ramen as a fine-dining novelty. (Wagamama was already doing this in London, and David Chang was making waves at his Momofuku in New York.) Around this time, chef Takashi Yagihashi started serving shoyu and miso ramen in the food court at the Macy's store in the Loop and during Sunday brunch at his namesake white-tablecloth Bucktown restaurant. Those led to Slurping Turtle, which he opened in River North in 2011. After that, Oiistar made a splash in Wicker Park, buoyed by its Yamato noodle-making machine.

Chicago's ramen renaissance truly arrived in the mid-2010s: High Five Ramen from the Au Cheval team, Furious Spoon, Wasabi, Ramen Shinkan in Palatine. Nick Kokonas, the financier behind Alinea and later the Tock reservation system, said he considered opening a place called Fuck Yeah Ramen.

But for Mike Satinover, posted in the ramen hinterlands of central Wisconsin in 2011, his Sapporo noodle experience became a phantom limb, an itch that couldn't be scratched.

The only solution was to make ramen himself. Early attempts were predictably awful. The process of making a bowl from scratch is so labor intensive that most amateurs would have given

up after one go. But just as it had with macarons, Satinover's predilection to try, tinker, and try again kicked into gear. His motivation this time was a deep yearning, a physical craving for that one perfect bowl of ramen. So he kept going.

By night he was the mythical Ramen Lord, chronicling every step of his ramen journey for an online fan base. By day, Mike Satinover made use of his business degree, working as a marketing research analyst. The decade he spent in that job gave him an understanding of consumers and of the product features that appealed to different types of them. (For example, how willing would someone living in the West Loop be to pay \$19 for a bowl of ramen?)

He reached, then blew past, his 10,000 hours for mastery a number of ways. Early on, he'd make a bowl of ramen from scratch once a month, and as he became more proficient, he upped that to once a week, then two, sometimes three bowls a week. Over the years, he amassed two dozen Japanese-language ramen cookbooks. He'd discover these during weeklong pilgrimages to Japan, where he'd consume between three and five bowls daily – "a very normal amount," Satinover contends – fastidiously documenting his research on Reddit and Instagram.

What improved Satinover's ramen making most swiftly was hosting pop-up dinners around the country, the first in 2017 at New York's Ramen Lab, an incubator for ramen chefs by the noodle manufacturer Sun Noodle. He'd get in his reps making as many as a hundred bowls a night. Driven by Satinover's growing profile on social media, coupled with a 2017 profile in the *Chicago Tribune*, his pop-ups became a hot item. He'd release the tickets on Tock at noon, and within 30 seconds, all 90 seats would sell out. Satinover branded his pop-ups Akahoshi Ramen – the name means "red star," a symbol that, fittingly and remarkably, appears on the flags of both Chicago and Hokkaido prefecture, of which Sapporo is the capital.

Satinover harbored dreams of quitting his lucrative day job to make ramen. But how? His celebrity on Reddit opened access to a network of professional chefs. "For something in the English language about ramen that showed proper

technique, how to source ingredients, how to make proper tare, there was no one else before Mike posted on Reddit," says Scott LaChapelle, who runs the acclaimed Rhode Island ramen shop Pickerel. "There was no information online, and Mike propelled that forward."

There's little consensus on who's the best ramen chef in America, but Keizo Shimamoto is on the shortlist. A Japanese American who blogged about ramen, he relocated to Tokyo for four years to learn how to make it. That devotion earned him a starring role in the 2013 documentary short *Ramen Dreams*. When he returned to the United States, he created the ramen burger (a hamburger with a bun made of crispy noodles), which became a viral sensation, and opened his acclaimed shop Ramen Shack in New York City and a second location in Orange County, California.

Satinover dined at Shimamoto's New York restaurant and introduced himself. Soon the two became friends. Satinover invited Shimamoto to his Chicago apartment, where he served him his interpretation of miso ramen. "It's top notch. I was really impressed," Shimamoto says. "I fell in love with miso ramen in Sapporo, and having Mike's in Chicago and getting that Hokkaido Sapporo feeling, that's what makes me emotional."

Shimamoto adds: "He tells everyone I'm the best ramen chef in America. He's definitely taking that crown pretty soon."

It's one thing to control every variable and cook one perfect bowl of ramen in your apartment. It's something else entirely to scale this up to serving 200 bowls a night to a paying public with sky-high expectations. There's the practical realities of opening a brick-and-mortar restaurant. (Running joke: How do you become a millionaire as a restaurateur? Be a billionaire, open a restaurant, and run it until you become a millionaire.) Even if the margins are decent, invariably there will be supply chain issues and fluctuating food costs. You'll need to train staff members to replicate your ramen faithfully, only to have many of them leave the job after a few months. Then there's dealing with the weekly torment of municipal bureaucracy.

Every pain point makes attaining that one perfect bowl even more difficult.

Shimamoto himself urged Satinover not to open a restaurant. In 2022, Shimamoto closed his remaining Ramen Shack in California. In addition to the staffing and supply issues that led to the decision, Shimamoto says, physical and mental health issues had taken a toll on him: “Whether you’re making a million bucks or not, you struggle and question daily what the point is of everything.”

Running a restaurant isn’t the domain of a talented hobbyist. Satinover knew scrutiny and bad reviews would come. And even though he could speak Japanese, he recognized that the optics of a white man making Japanese food and being heaped with acclaim for it weren’t great, even if the criticism came largely from white people on social media. “I doubt very much that the best ramen is in some white guy’s house,” one Facebook commentator wrote in response to the 2017 *Tribune* story. Satinover’s personal Facebook account was flooded with messages from people calling him a cultural appropriator—but not one of those people, as far as he could tell, was Japanese. (Several Japanese friends tell me that when gaijin come to Japan and attempt their culture’s cooking, the locals view it not as appropriation but as appreciation of their cuisine.)

It’s routine that chefs—white chefs in particular—who devote their culinary lives to a cuisine not of their ethnic origin hear about it from the online cultural appropriation police. The really successful ones, like Andy Ricker, formerly of Portland’s Pok Pok empire, and Rick Bayless, Chicago’s Mexican food devotee, mitigate criticism by being fastidious in their research and respect for tradition. They speak the language, they spend time living in the country, they dive into the cuisine headfirst.

Of those who criticize him, Satinover says this: “It doesn’t matter that I studied Japanese throughout high school and college, that I majored in Japanese. It doesn’t matter. I’m not Japanese, I’ll never be Japanese.”

It would be one thing if this were a passing fancy for Satinover. But it’s a deeply embedded desire of his—one he can’t deny himself. He decided against outside investors because he didn’t want to compromise on his vision. So he

poured his life’s savings into Akahoshi Ramen. His goal is simple enough to be written on a napkin: He just wants to make ramen for a living. And he is fine, at least for now, earning a third of his marketing job salary to do it.

“Just doing the math, there’s no return on investment here,” Satinover says. “It’s to have my dream ramen shop. I need my own ramen shop. I don’t care if it makes money or not. I would just hate myself if I didn’t have my ramen shop.”

Over the last few years, this pursuit has provided plenty for Satinover to talk about with his therapist. Recently, their sessions have focused on pushing back against the high expectations of others and, in a way, the voice in his own head. Satinover feels a particular turmoil in accepting praise: He needs a certain amount to satisfy the ego, but he also feels dishonorable when the word “best” gets foisted on him. It sets him up for failure.

“‘Best’ is what I’m working towards, and when I get it, I don’t like it,” he says. “How do I give myself more compassion to enjoy the fruits of my labor, instead of beating myself up?”



FOURTEEN YEARS NEARLY TO the day he tasted that life-changing bowl in Sapporo, 70 days after quitting his marketing job, Mike Satinover peeled back the butcher paper taped over the windows and doors, wiped the glass clean, and opened Akahoshi Ramen to the public. It was the night after Thanksgiving.

He had installed a seven-seat counter, where you could watch him assemble bowls, like you might at a shop in Sapporo. What felt more like an American restaurant were the additional 50 tabled seats, where you could dine more leisurely and, ideally, order a few yuzu highballs to drive up the check average. He had assembled a team of four cooks and five front-of-house staffers. One of those cooks, a longtime fan of Ramen_Lord, DM’d Satinover about working for him the day Satinover announced Akahoshi on social media.

Satinover had learned that if you try to please everyone with options, you risk pleasing no one. So he kept his menu intentionally sparse: four types of ramens, two rice dishes, and extra

toppings. That’s it. There is no tonkotsu, the crowd-pleasing, bombastic, pork-fat-laden ramen that’s seemingly obligatory on every ramen menu in America.

His signature bowl is, of course, the Sapporo-style miso ramen, made with a blend of three miso pastes imported from Japan. Also on the menu is a lighter variant, the soy-sauce-based shoyu, as well as tantanmen, a Japanese take on the Sichuan street food dan dan noodles. This bowl does not have broth; instead, it’s mixed with a cool sesame sauce and topped with numbingly spicy crumbles of ground pork. Satinover’s final ramen is also soupless: aburasoba, a garlicky, soy saucy variant with fried scallions and a generous heap of chopped pork belly.

“We only have four ramen, so each one has to be pretty awesome,” he told me as he prepared for the opening that night. “If it’s not awesome, we’ll have a problem.”

The best word to describe the scene in the restaurant hours before the first-ever customers arrived: “boring.” Satinover was washing dishes, sipping his dinner of Monster Energy Ultra Sunrise. The pork belly chashu sat sliced in a hotel pan in three-ounce portions. The broth had been heated to exactly 203 degrees Fahrenheit, a temperature that won’t agitate and cloud the soup. A line cook was snipping toasted seaweed with a pair of scissors. Satinover offered the cooks their choice of prep music, and they chose an album called *Impenetrable Cerebral Fortress* by the hardcore metal band Gulch. Everything was prepped and precise.

At 5 p.m., the music was switched to something less cranium crushing and more low-fi chill, and soon Satinover called out the restaurant’s first orders: “Two shoyus, two misos, please!” The first tantanmen came out of the kitchen at 5:30; Satinover was delighted that the diner asked for extra chile oil.

From the open kitchen, Satinover hobnobbed with well-wishers, many of whom were regular attendees of his pop-ups, and accepted liquid gifts of congratulations. Unlike the ramen culture in Japan, where diners eat as quickly as possible, then leave, Akahoshi has a relaxed come-stay-for-a-while air about it.

Judging from messages reposted on the restaurant’s Instagram feed,

customers – including local food writers – enjoyed what they tasted. Nick Kindelsperger, who has since left his post as a *Tribune* food critic, was among the first diners that opening night, and he posted on Instagram: “This is the best ramen I’ve had in Chicago.”

But there were issues that first week. One night, the ajitama sat too long in the warm soy sauce marinade, so instead of the oozy lava flow, the yolks were fully hard-boiled. Some of the soup was overly salty because the broth wasn’t properly diluted. Another night, the bok choy on the tantanmen was ice cold. The toilet in one of the restrooms overflowed.

Five days in, Eater Chicago published a story about the restaurant’s growing popularity under the headline “Akahoshi Ramen, Now Open in Logan Square, Is Chicago’s Toughest Reservation.” Satinover wasn’t thrilled about that, because it’s not entirely true, as he allocates 50 seats to walk-ins nightly. Between a reputation for hard-to-score reservations and the early adulation from reviewers, Satinover had a creeping sense that the lofty expectations were getting pushed further beyond reach. He’s already heard from a number of customers that \$19 a bowl is too expensive. One Google reviewer questioned whether those claiming Akahoshi has the “best ramen in Chicago” were paid off by Satinover.

“The major criticism of this restaurant is that it’s overhyped,” Satinover says. “I knew we would have this problem, I just didn’t realize how much.”

As a former food writer at the *Tribune* and an avowed ramen geek, I’ve tasted a good sampling of bowls around town. How does Satinover’s stack up? I find his interpretations fantastic – the miso and tantanmen in particular. I’ve had countless other bowls that leave me feeling like I ingested a fat-and-salt bomb. Akahoshi’s are rich but not heavy. The flavor is subtly robust, and the noodles have an appealing bounce. Everything about the bowls tastes clean and unadulterated.

I think part of why Satinover’s ramen seems so exceptional to me is that I have been given privileged information. He painstakingly walked me through the choices he made in composing each

bowl. He explained to me how he gives the noodles the requisite chew. I saw him scoop out the three-miso blend used for the tare, the primary seasoning agent that contributes the earthy, sweet-savory undertow in his miso ramen. I watched him use a refractometer to make sure his broth had the proper viscosity. Would a casual diner, without all that, appreciate Satinover’s ramen the same way?

Apparently so. As I watched Satinover prepare the dough that morning in early December – Akahoshi Ramen’s 11th day in business – he spat out his restaurant’s scores for me like a die-hard Bulls fan reciting Michael Jordan stats: On Google, Akahoshi had exactly 39 reviews, with an average of 4.7 stars; on OpenTable, it had 70 reviews, all but one a five-star rating. The previous night, 147 customers walked through the door, ordering 180 bowls of ramen. (Weeks later, Satinover would serve 197 bowls in four hours.)

A normal day at the restaurant for him is 14 hours. And a little more than a week into his new life, he was very tired. Asked on Reddit what he misses from his old desk job, Satinover answered that it was not having body aches all day long. “I’ve prioritized this restaurant over everything else in my life,” he told me. “I have no other hobbies, nothing else is driving me. It’s more important than friends, my own mental and physical well-being. And I’m kind of OK with that.”

This is his new reality, from now until the day his restaurant shutter: coming to terms with the fact that making one perfect bowl of ramen 180 times a night is impossible and futile. Where does one cede control? What compromises will need to be made? And when others proclaim you the most exciting ramen chef in America, is that just putting a target on your back?

Satinover thinks about all this often – it’ll be fodder for his next conversation with his therapist. But that morning there were more pressing issues. He needed to finish making those noodles. And he had just gotten word that his dishwasher had a DJ gig that night and wouldn’t make dinner service. Satinover was going to have to wash 180-plus bowls himself. 

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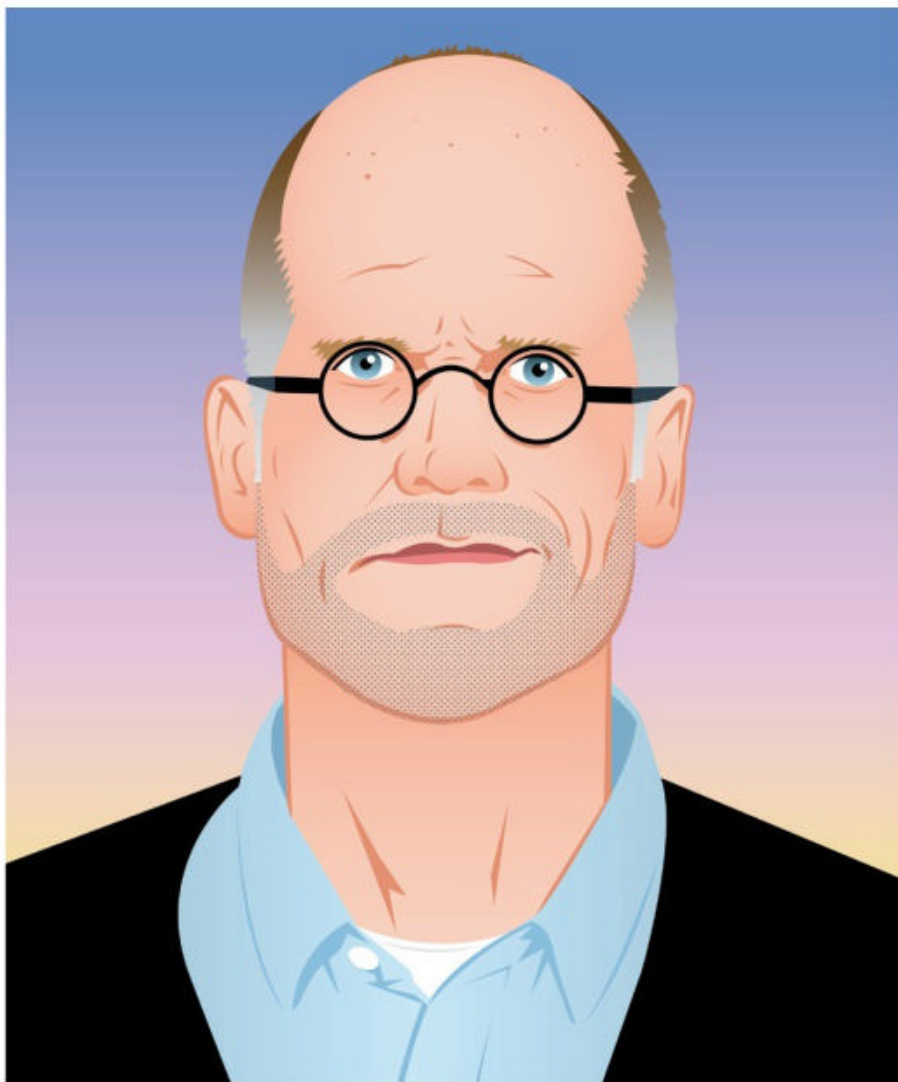
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Chris Ware

The cartoonist, 56, on why he doesn't script his stories and why self-confidence is overrated

Interview by MIKE THOMAS

■ **All the *Peanuts* characters felt like real people** to me as a kid, almost like my friends. Simply opening one of those old decaying *Peanuts* paperbacks in my grandparents' basement felt like going to someone's house to play. I felt so sorry for Charlie Brown that I made him a valentine, even though I knew he was just a drawing. That Charles Schulz could affect me so deeply with his simple little doodles remains an astonishing artistic summit against which I'm always comparing myself.

■ **No matter what I draw**, somehow it always comes out looking slightly more considered and composed than the thing itself, which maybe is the first step towards what we think of as "beauty" in art. Our brains naturally condense experience into a more intense or pleasing version. Just trying to see something clearly, like the way we used to lay around in the grass as kids and look at clover and bugs and worms, is, I think, where it all starts.

■ **When you're young, art is a sort of pressure valve**, an oasis of freedom. The problems start when the art starts paying for food and shelter, since you then risk freezing up and ceasing to try new things – or, even worse, worrying about what others think.

■ **I don't plan my stories** except to take random notes as I think of things while driving, mowing, brushing my teeth, et cetera – most of which don't go into the books. The notes are simply a trick to get me down to work. I found early on that if I wrote a script, the pictures ended up just being illustrations, not an irreplaceable part of the story itself, with the result dead on arrival. But the ideas that occurred to me as I drew – pictures opening up into memories and experiences I'd forgotten about – produced much better, more believable, and more complicated and intertwined stories. I learned to trust my unconscious. It's very important for the artist to find the structure of a story rather than to impose one.

■ **I am very dubious of everything I do** and profoundly uncertain of its value. I used to hope that as I got older this uncertainty would temper and I'd develop some sort of self-confidence, but that never happened. It rankles me that self-confidence is somehow seen as a positive trait; I don't think it serves anyone, and most self-confident people I've met are either mildly insane or, worse, jerks, and use it as a means of domination, which is just plain repellent.

■ **It's important to treat your child's opinions**, efforts, and thoughts as valuable and interesting, because they are. My daughter, Clara, provided a virtual fire hose of insights and epiphanies in her elementary and middle school years: "Dad, everyone's always talking about time machines, but we all have one. It's called your mind!" Kids want to be heard, seen, and believed, which my mother and my grandmother both did, generously, for me.

■ **One of the best art teachers I ever had** at the University of Texas at Austin, Richard Jordan, told our painting class one day that if somebody – friend, critic, whoever – said that they didn't like something you'd done, try to separate the hurt of their criticism from the simple fact that they noticed something you did and, especially, that it got to them. ■



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